



Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala Parikramā

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Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, originally inaugurated by Śrīman Mahāprabhu Himself, has been conducted for over fifty years under the supervision and guidance of Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. This book is a beautiful exposition of the confidential places of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweet pastimes in Vraja. The sincere devotee who has a deep thirst to enter into the sweetness of the land of Vraja will find ambrosial nectar flowing through these pages.

“Blessed is this land of Vraja, where the creator of the universe, Lord Brahmā, dwells in the form of a mountain range in Varsānā, to have the dust of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet on his head; where the maintainer, Lord Viṣṇu, has assumed the forms of Govardhana and Viṣṇu-parvata; where the moon-crested Lord Śiva has taken up residence as Nandīśvara Hill in Nandagrāma; and where Śrī Uddhava, the best of Hari's servants, lives as a blade of grass, a small shrub or a creeper on the bank of Kusuma-sarovara.”

Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja



Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja



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śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

ŚRĪ VRAJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

*vṛndāvanam sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīrtim
yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyam
prekṣyādri-sānv-avaratānya-samasta-sattvam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.21.10)

“O *sakhī*, the fame of the Earth is enhanced, having been splendidly decorated with the marks of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. Upon hearing Kṛṣṇa’s flute song, the peacocks take it to be the thunder of the clouds and, becoming intoxicated, begin to dance. When the other animals in the meadows of Govardhana see this, they also feel pleasure and become stunned. Thus, the presence of Śrī Vṛndāvana on the Earth makes this planet even more glorious than *Vaikuṅṭha*.”

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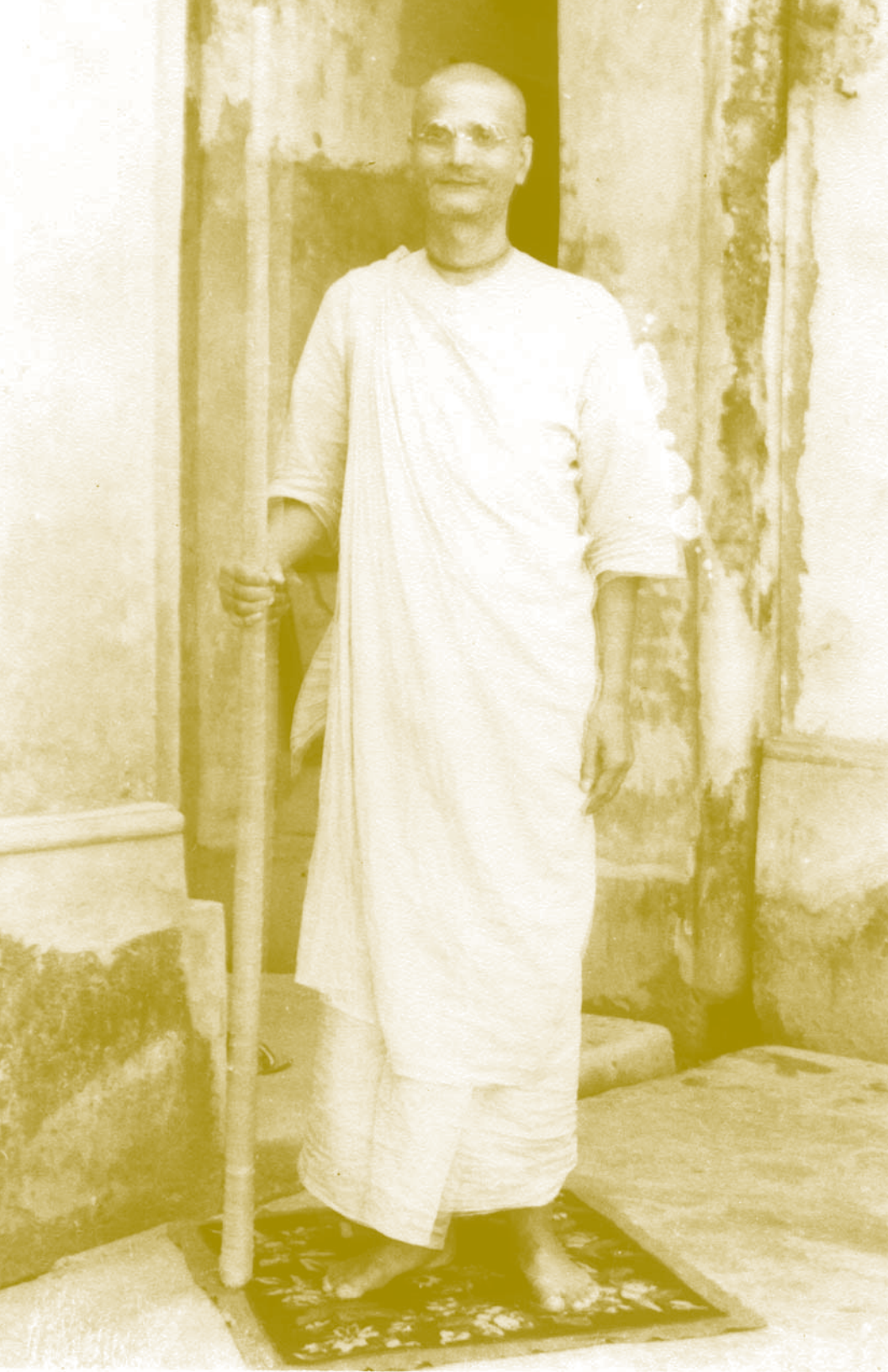
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Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala Paṛikramā

by

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja



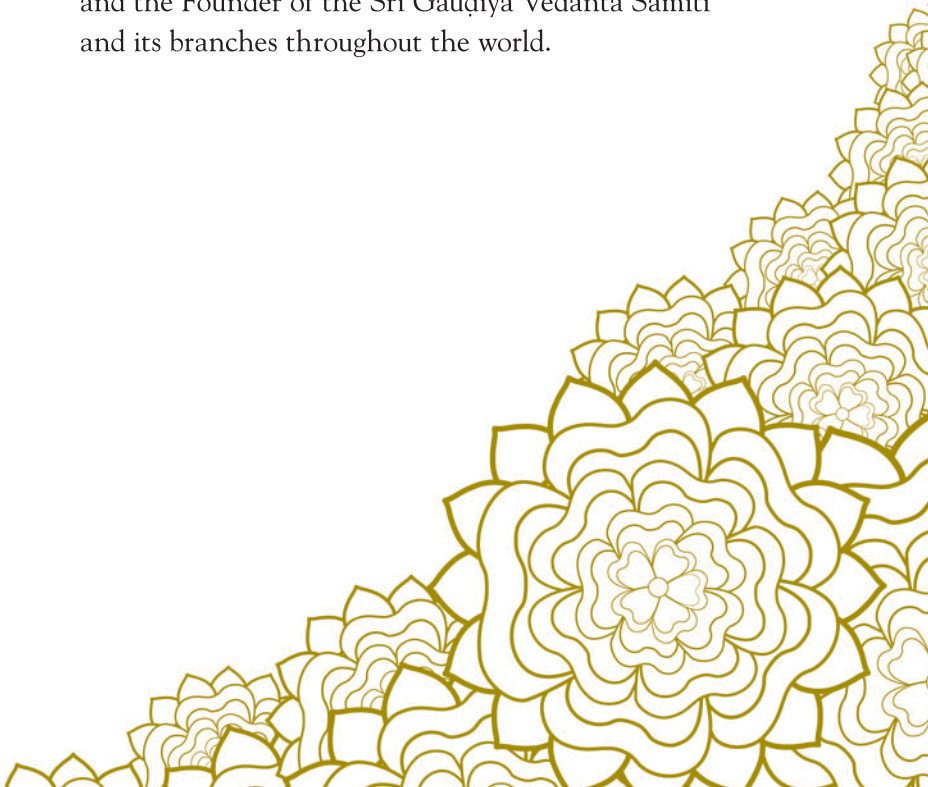


*Dedicated to
my Holy Master*

*śrī-gauḍīya-vedānta-ācārya-kesarī nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa
om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata śrī śrīmad*

Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

the best amongst the tenth generation
of descendants in the *bhāgavat-paramparā*
from Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahārabhu,
and the Founder of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti
and its branches throughout the world.





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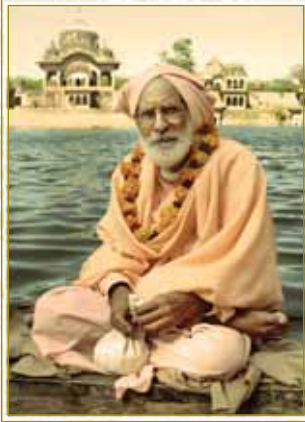
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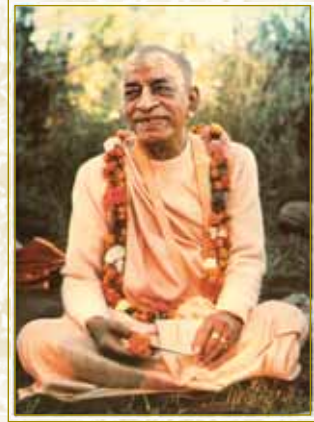
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ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



*om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja*



*nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja*

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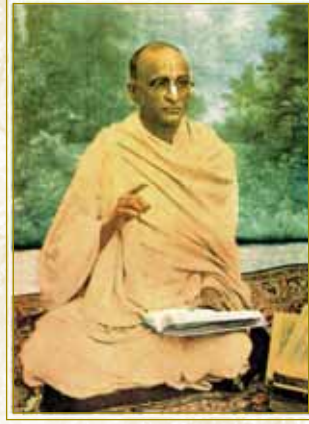
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*nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad
Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja*



*nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda*



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INTRODUCTION

(to the first Hindi edition)



In 1946, I took shelter of the lotus feet of my most worshipful spiritual master, *om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. From that time, by his causeless mercy, I received the good fortune to travel with him. On many occasions, I was highly blessed to perform *parikramā* and have *darśana* of sacred places (*tīrthas*) throughout all of India. We visited places such as Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu's birthplace (Māyāpura Yogapīṭha); the islands of Śrī Dhāma Navadvīpa; pastimes places and other sacred places of Gauḍa-maṇḍala; Vaidyanātha Devaghara; Mandāra Madhusūdana; Gayā; Kāśī; Prayāga; Ayodhyā; Naimiṣāraṇya; the places Śrīman Mahāprabhu visited in South India; Dvārakā and other places of pilgrimage of West India; Ajantā-Elorā of Central India; the sacred places of Rājasthāna, such as Jaipur and Ajmer; and all the pastime places of Vraja-maṇḍala. Furthermore, after Śrīla Gurudeva left this world to enter his unmanifest pastimes, I was fortunate enough to again visit and

perform *parikramā* of these sacred pastime places several times under the guidance of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti.

Above all, however, I received the great opportunity of performing Vraja-maṅḍala *parikramā* on foot each year with my most worshipful holy master and some five hundred faithful devotees. Śrī Gurudeva entrusted the responsibility of serving Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha to me in 1954. Since then, I have annually been performing Vraja-maṅḍala *parikramā* with the *brahmacāris* of Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha and some of the many devout and respectable residents of Mathurā. Thus, I have been fortunate to have performed Vraja-maṅḍala *parikramā* more than fifty times in over fifty years.

After the disappearance of Śrī Gurudeva, I gave lectures during Śrī Vraja-maṅḍala *parikramā* on the pastime places and their glories. A short compilation of these lectures was published in English a few years ago in a book entitled *Śrī Vraja-maṅḍala Parikramā*. This book was highly regarded by faithful persons in India and abroad, and all copies quickly sold. Time and again, devotees from all parts of the world asked for it to be reprinted, with yet more pastime places to cover the entire Vraja-maṅḍala. I could not ignore their requests, and attempted to fulfil their desire. But then I left India and began travelling round the world to countries big and small, to preach pure *bhakti* as taught and practised by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. I was writing other books on *bhakti* at the time, and was suffering recurrent poor health, so I could not complete the task. After returning from preaching abroad in July 1999, I wanted to finally finish the book, but, once again, was obstructed by sudden ill health.

Under these circumstances, I decided to present myself at the lotus feet of Śrīman Mahāprabhu Śacīnandana Gaurahari in the Gambhīra, at the lotus feet of Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura at Siddhabakula, and at the lotus feet of Śrī Gadādhara Paṅḍita, the potency of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, at Ṭoṭa Gopīnātha in Śrī Jagannātha Purī. I resolved to complete this book there, only by their mercy. I stayed

in Purī-dhāma for some time and on Viśvarūpa-mahotsava, 25th September, 1999, completed *Vraja-maṇḍala Parikramā*.

I have based this book on *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata*, *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Bhakti-ratnākara* by Śrī Narahari Cakravartī, *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa* by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, and especially *Vraja-maṇḍala Darśana (Parikramā)* compiled by Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābāji Mahārāja of Kusuma-sarovara. I have also collected various references to different pastimes from *Govinda-līlāmṛta* by Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* composed by *vraja-rasa rasika* Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, and the various works of the Gosvāmīs. In this regard, I remember my spiritual master, *paramārādhya aṣṭotara-śata* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, by whose mercy I received everything on the subject of *Vraja-maṇḍala parikramā* and the many pastime places in Vraja. I have strung these recollections together with references to the pastime places from the various literary works. Before meeting my holy master and receiving his causeless mercy, my life was void.

Begging for a particle of the mercy of Śrī Guru,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa

Śrī Śārada-pūrṇimā
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī
Mahārāja's disappearance day
13th October, 2000 (26 Āśvina, 2057 Samvat)



PREFACE

(to the first English edition)



or those sincere devotees who deeply desire to enter into the sweetness of Śrī Vraja-dhāma, this book is cause for great joy. It takes the faithful reader on an extraordinary journey through Vraja, following the same general route taken annually on Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*.

Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* was inaugurated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda re-established it in October 1932, and his dear most disciple, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, sustained it in the decades that followed. Our beloved spiritual master, *om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, has been guiding pilgrims on this *parikramā* since 1954, thus fulfilling the inner heart's desire of all the *ācāryas* in our line.

The Western world was first introduced to Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* by the causeless mercy of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, who founded the International Society for Kṛṣṇa

Consciousness (ISKCON) in July 1966 and spread the teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu to every corner of the globe. For more than twenty years, Western devotees have been helped to gain a further appreciation of Śrī Vraja-dhāma by Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja who emphasises the value of trying to deeply enter Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's teachings on *bhakti*. This English translation of *Śrī Vraja-maṅḍala Parikramā* is another of the priceless gems that he is giving to the English-speaking world.

This volume is basically a direct translation of the Hindi edition with some slight changes to the order of the material, mostly to provide greater continuity. We were guided in our efforts by our dear Gurudeva, as well as by Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Mādhava Mahārāja, Śrīman Pundarika dāsa Brahmācārī and Śrīman Mādhava-priya dāsa Brahmācārī.

This rendition of *Śrī Vraja-maṅḍala Parikramā* is not meant as a catalogue of information or data. Rather, it is meant to stir the heart of the faithful and inquisitive readers, inspiring them to understand more deeply the sweet Vraja pastimes of the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, having directly heard them spoken from the lips of a pure Vaiṣṇava.

I am grateful to Janakī dāsī for translating *Śrī Vraja-maṅḍala Parikramā* into English. She was assisted by Manjulālī dāsī and Gaura-hari dāsa. Vaijayantī-mālā dāsī and Sundara-gopāla dāsa edited the text and helped in various ways to bring this book to print. The manuscript was proofread by Vicitrī dāsī, Mañjarī dāsī and many others. Kṛṣṇa-karuṇya dāsa Brahmācārī did the layout. Photographs for the book are courtesy of Hemant Kumār, Kaliya-damana dāsa, Saradā dāsī, Rūpa-Raghunātha dāsa Brahmācārī, Bhakta Charles and others.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Nanda-kiśora dāsa, Purandara dāsa Brahmācārī, Śrīmatī Umā didī, Vṇḍāvana-vilāsīnī dāsī, Sudarśana dāsa, Kiśora-kṛṣṇa dāsa, Atula-kṛṣṇa dāsa and Śrīnivāsa dāsa for their valuable help. I also want to express my heart-felt gratitude to the devotees in the Mathurā Maṭha, under

the guidance of Śrīman Premānanda dāsa Brahmācārī, who are always supporting the Western devotees by providing *hari-kathā*, *prasāda*, lodging and their hospitality in general.

Finally, I want to thank Rādhā-kānta dāsa, Rati-kalā dāsī and Rāma-kānta dāsa, whose generous financial contributions made this production possible.

I humbly beg our readers to overlook any imperfections they might find within this book. Anything that is pleasing and that touches the heart is the result of the mercy of our spiritual master, and any errors are due to my own inadequacies.

Aspiring to serve
Śrī Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas,
Śānti dāsī

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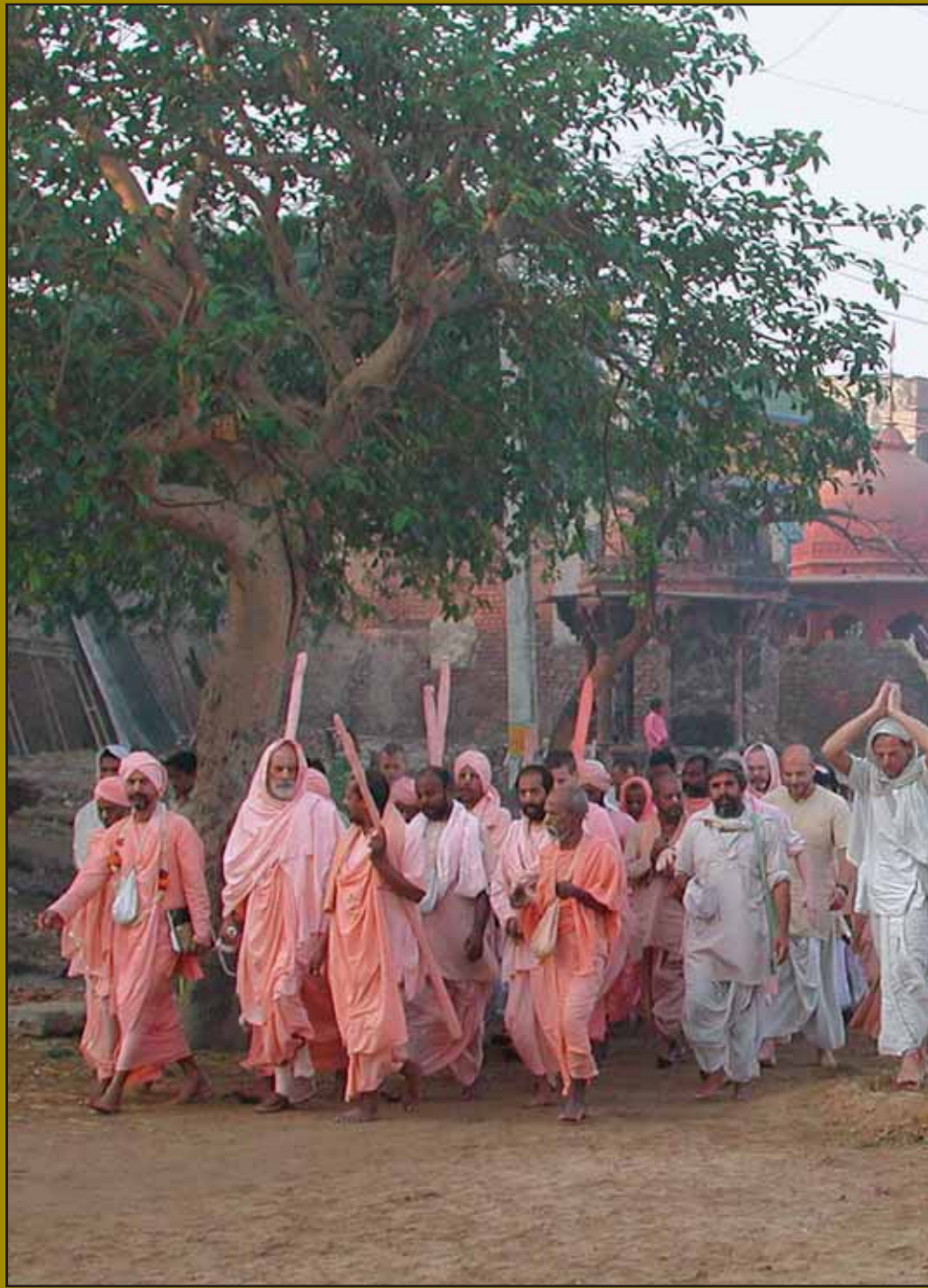
*In various way the following devotees gave their generous assistance to the
production of this book:* Brajanātha dāsa, Rati Mañjarī dāsī, Śaśī-kāla dāsī,
Vṛndāvana-vilāsini dāsī

Pronunciation Guide

We have used standard diacritical markings to indicate the specific pronunciation of Sanskrit and Hindi words. Pronounce ā like a in father, ī like ea in neat, ū like oo in root, ṛ like rī in rip, ṁ and ṅ like ng in hung, ś and ṣ like sh in shy, and c like ch in chap.



Part One







THE NATURE OF VRAJA



rajati gacchati iti vrajaḥ – that which moves around is Vraja.” This is the original understanding of the word *vraja*. The places where Nanda Bābā dwelt and moved around with his cows, calves, family and associates are called Vraja. “*Vrajanti gāvaḥ yasminnati vrajaḥ* – the land where the cows, cowherd men, cowherd boys and cowherd girls wander is known as Vraja.” Vraja particularly denotes the land of the Supreme Person Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.

The flirtatious hero of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*, the embodiment of the nectar of all primary and secondary spiritual tastes, or *rasas*. In this Vraja, He performs His eternal pastimes with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who is the embodiment of *mahābhāva* (the essence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure potency), and His other associates. The most exalted of all nectar-filled pastimes, namely, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *rāsa-līlā*, and His numerous other pastimes, take place here eternally. In this Vraja, every glance

ŚRĪ VRAJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

and gesture is filled with *rasa*. Here, the original enjoyer, Śrī Govinda eternally enjoys nectar-filled sports and pastimes with those *gopīs* who have manifested from His own intrinsic form (*svarūpabhūtā gopīs*). These pastimes have no beginning and no end. That place where there is nothing but an endless ocean of *prema*, whose waves of the most elevated, radiant mellow of intimate paramour love (*unnatojjvala-praṇaya-rasa*) are constantly rising up and swelling over, is Vraja. That place consisting purely of *rasa*, that is continuously savoured by those expert in relishing loving mellows (*rasikas*), and those who can taste transcendental mellows (*bhavukas*), is the land of Vraja.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.44.13) gives a deeply moving description of Vraja:

*puṇyā bata vraja-bhuvo yad ayaṁ ṅ-linga
gūḍhaḥ purāṇa-puruṣo vana-citra-mālyah
gāḥ pālayan saha-balaḥ kvaṇayamś ca veṇuṁ
vikṛīḍayāñcati giritra-ramārcitāṅghriḥ*

“O *sakhī*, the actual truth is that the land of Vraja is supremely pure and blessed, because here the Supreme Person is living, disguised as a human being. That same Lord, whose lotus feet are worshipped by the lord of all lords, Mahādeva Śaṅkara, and by Śrī Ramā-devī, wanders about here with His brother Balarāma and His cowherd boy friends. Adorned with a garland of multicoloured flowers, He grazes the cows and plays the flute sweetly. Absorbed in many kinds of pastimes, He wanders here and there with delight. By the touch of His lotus feet, this land of Vraja has become virtuous and successful.”

The *Skanda Purāṇa* also presents a beautiful definition of the word *vraja*:

*guṇātītaṁ paraṁ brahma vyāpakam vraja ucyate
sadānandaṁ paraṁ jyoti muktānām padavyayam*

“Parabrahman, the Supreme Absolute Truth, is beyond the three modes – goodness, passion and ignorance – and because He pervades every single particle of the universe, He is called *vraja*. His place, the embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss, is supremely brilliant and indestructible. Residing here are the supreme connoisseurs of ecstatic transcendental mellows, who are liberated from material existence.”

Goloka and Vraja (Gokula)

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 5.17) states:

sarvopari śrī-gokula – vrajaloka-dhāma
śrī-goloka, śvetadvīpa, vṛndāvana nāma

“Śrī Gokula, the topmost abode, has many names – Vraja, Goloka, Śvetadvīpa and Vṛndāvana.”

Thus, these names are all considered synonymous. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, an intimate associate of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, resolves any confusion about Gokula and Goloka in his book *Śrī Laghubhāgavatāmṛta*: *yat tu goloka-nāma syāt tac ca gokula-vaibhavam; tād ātmya-vaibhavatvañ ca tasya tan-mahimonnateḥ*. He states here that the glory of Gokula is identical with the glory of Goloka. In fact, Goloka is merely the glory of Gokula. Similarly, Vṛndāvana and Gokula are simply different names for Vraja.

The second verse of *Brahma-saṁhitā* describes this Gokula-dhāma:

sahasra-patra-kamalaṁ gokulākhyam mahat-padam
tat karṇikāra-tad-dhāma tad-anantāṁśa-sambhavam

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has explained the meaning of this verse as follows: “Mahā-Vaikuṅṭha, or Paravyoma-dhāma, is eternally situated beyond the Virajā River. This holy abode is the embodiment of three divine opulences: being imperishable, free from sorrow and free from all types of fear. The extremely sweet

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Gokula, otherwise known as Goloka, which is full of unlimited transcendental opulence, is situated beyond that Paravyomadhāma. Sometimes Goloka is also called Gokula, but Goloka is actually the opulence or manifestation of Gokula, the abode of all sweet pastimes. This holy abode, radiant as Goloka or Gokula, appears in the form of Gokula below Vaikuṅṭha on the Earth planet.”

In Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta (2.5.168), the quintessence of all scriptures, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī writes:

*yathā krīḍati tadbhūmau goloke 'pi tathaiva saḥ
adha ūrdhvatayā bhedo 'nayoḥ kalpyeta kevalam*

“Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Gokula, which is situated on the material plane, are the same as those in Goloka. The only difference between Goloka and Gokula is that Goloka is situated in the highest region and Gokula manifests on the Earth planet.”

In *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has accepted Goloka as the manifestation of Vṛndāvana.¹

Vraja: the eternal abode of parakīyā-bhāva, the mood of unwedded amorous love

In Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 4.47) Śrīla Kavīrāja Gosvāmī states:

*parakīyā-bhāve ati rasera ullāsa
vraja binā ihāra anyatra nāhi vāsa*

Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura comments in his *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya* on this verse: “Many people think that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is performing His pastimes eternally in Goloka and appears in Vraja for a short time just to perform His pastimes in *parakīyā-bhāva*, the mood of unwedded amorous love. This, however, is not the opinion of our Gauḍīya *gosvāmīs*, who accept also the pastimes in Vraja as eternal. Vraja is the name of the absolute inner chamber of the

transcendental and eternal Goloka-dhāma. The same pastimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs in Vṛndāvana on Earth, including those of *parakīyā-rasa*, transpire eternally in the supremely situated, eternal Vraja-dhāma.”

Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī states in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādilīlā 3.10):

*aṣṭāvīmśa catur-yuge dvāparera śeṣe
vrajera sahita haya kṛṣṇera prakāśe*

Here the words *vrajera sahita*, “along with Vraja”, clarify that also existing in transcendental Goloka-dhāma is one inconceivably sweet abode named Vraja. Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared on Earth along with this very abode, with the help of His inconceivable potency. *Parakīyā-rasa* is permanently present only in this eternal Vraja, which lies within the inner chambers of Goloka. This is because the supreme mellow, *parakīyā-rasa*, is present there with qualities unlimitedly superior to those found anywhere else in Goloka.

Even in the Vraja manifest on this Earth planet, living entities have been able to directly witness the variegated nature of the unmanifest Vraja in the transcendental realm. Besides *prakaṭa-prakāśa* (the manifest appearance) and *aprakaṭa-prakāśa* (the unmanifest appearance) the only remaining mystery is that on Earth there is also a *dṛśyamāna-prakāśa*, which is the vision ordinary people have of Vṛndāvana and other holy abodes when the pastimes are no longer manifest there.

Vraja: the land of enchanting beauty and sweetness

Brahma-saṁhitā (5.56) describes Vṛndāvana-dhāma, or Goloka, in this way:

*śriyaḥ kāntāḥ kāntaḥ parama-puruṣaḥ kalpa-taravo
drumā bhūmiś cintāmaṇi-gaṇa-mayī toyam amṛtam
kathā gānaṁ nāṭyaṁ gamanam api vaṁśī priya-sakhī
cid-ānandaṁ jyotiḥ param api tad āsvādyam api ca*

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*sa yatra kṣīrābdkhiḥ sraivati surabhībhyas ca su-mahān
nimeṣārdhākhyo vā vrajati na hi yatrāpi samayah
bhaje śvetadvīpam tam aham iha golokam iti yaṁ
vidantas te santaḥ kṣiti-virala-cārāḥ katipaye*

“I worship that supreme abode of Śvetadvīpa, where the Supreme Personality Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only lover; where His *svarūpabhūtā vraja-gopīs*, the embodiment of all Lakṣmīs, are the beloveds; where every tree and creeper is a transcendental desire-tree; where the earth is made of spiritual touchstone and the water is nectar; where speech is like melodious song and movements are like dance; where the flute is the dear female companion; where light is full of knowledge and bliss; where each and every supreme, transcendental object is all tasty and delectable; where great divine oceans of milk continually flow from the udders of uncountable *surabhī* cows; and where transcendental time is eternal, and without past and future, so that even half a moment never slips away. In this material world, only rare, saintly personalities behold this abode as Goloka, and only those who are the objects of Gokulapati Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy can understand the nature of this abode.”

The *Ṛg-veda* (1st *maṇḍala*, *sūkta* 154) also describes Vraja-dhāma:

*tā vām vāstūnyuśmasi gamadhyai yatra gāvo bhūriśṛṅgā ayāsaḥ
atrāha tadurūgāyasya vṛṣṇāḥ paramam padamavabhāti bhūri*

“Vraja-Vṛndāvana is the Lord’s topmost *dhāma*, or sacred abode. There, the Supreme Personality Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the object of the Vedas, sweetly plays His flute and protects the roaming cows, who have many good qualities and beautiful horns.”

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.10), the *gopīs* themselves sing the glories of Vṛndāvana:

*vṛndāvanam sakhī bhuvo vitanoti kīrtim
yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyam
prekṣyādri-sānv-avaratānya-samasta-sattvam*

“O *sakhī*, the fame of the Earth is enhanced, having been splendidly decorated with the marks of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. Upon hearing Kṛṣṇa’s flute song, the peacocks take it to be the thunder of the clouds and, becoming intoxicated, begin to dance. When the other animals in the meadows of Govardhana see this, they also feel pleasure and become stunned. Thus, the presence of Śrī Vṛndāvana on the Earth makes this planet even more glorious than Vaikuṅṭha.”

The *gopīs* also say, “O *sakhī*, all of the six seasons’ many flowers, such as *belī*, *jūhī*, *camelī*, *campaka* and *kadamba*, bloom all over Vṛndāvana. Their fragrance reaches far and wide, inviting bees to partake of their honey. They come in swarms to drink this honey and, becoming intoxicated, start humming. This sound seems to come from Vana-devī, the goddess of the forest, who, having anticipated the arrival of Madhupati Kṛṣṇa, now welcomes Him. When birds with sweet and melodious voices like the *śuka*, *pika* and *paṇīha*, hear the humming of the bees, how can they remain silent? They are also immersed in bliss, and fly from one tree to another and from one branch to the next. Vṛndāvana resonates with their harmonious singing, that echoes all over the hills and across rivers and ponds.

“Aha, Vṛndāvana is such an extraordinary and astonishing sacred abode. In this Vṛndāvana, the sweet splendour of spring, the king of all seasons, is ever present, and a green velvety carpet covers the surface of the earth. Lotuses of many colours bloom in the ponds and rivers, and the branches of the trees are well adorned with fully-bloomed *campā*, *camelī*, *belī*, *jūhī* and other delightfully fragrant flowers, whose nectar is relished by intoxicated bees. The entire atmosphere is pervaded with both transcendental bliss and

the intoxication of youth. These combine to create a kingdom of ever-increasing joy that captivates the body and mind.”

Playing sweetly on His flute, Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa roams throughout this land of Vraja along with His elder brother, Balarāma, and Their innumerable cowherd boy friends and cows. This land of Vraja is blessed; where the creator of the universe, Lord Brahmā, dwells in the form of a mountain range in Varsānā, to have the dust of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet on his head; where the maintainer, Lord Viṣṇu, has assumed the forms of Govardhana and Viṣṇu-parvata; where the moon-crested Mahādeva (Lord Śiva) has taken up residence as Nandiśvara Hill in Nandagrāma; and where Uddhava, the best of Śrī Hari’s servants, lives as a blade of grass, a small shrub and a creeper on the bank of Kusuma-sarovara.

Here in Vraja, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes the calves and relishes the tender and delicious grass.² Here the young girls of Vraja go daily to wells and other sources of water (*pana-ghaṭas*) on the pretext of filling their water-pots, but in fact they go only to fill the pots of their hearts with the *rasa* of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. “*Panaghata jāna dai rī, panaghata jāta hai* – My friend, please let me go to the *pana-ghaṭa*, otherwise the resolve (*pana*) to meet my beloved will diminish (*ghaṭa jāegā*).” To protect this resolve, the young girls of Vraja would crowd the *pana-ghaṭa*, carrying their clay pots.

At this place, which is filled with *rasa* (*rasilā*), the Vraja girls begin to dip their pots in the water on the pretext of filling them. Then, the *rasilā* flute of the crown jewel of all *rasikas* fills the air with *rasa*. Who even notices whether these girls of Vraja fill their pots or bring them back empty? O my friend, this is all the wonder of that *pana-ghaṭa*.

The topmost relisher of transcendental mellows, Vrajendra-nandana, repeatedly drowns in *rasa* – in the sweet groves that echo with the rippling sounds of the Kālindī River, and in the twisted and narrow *rasilā* lanes. He drowns in the *rasilā* teasing of the *rasilī* girls of Vraja – in the heated disputes He has with them;

in their crooked, sweet glances; in the sweet conversations and water-sports He enjoys with them. Who can describe the glories of such a place as Vraja?

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī has explained the meaning of Vṛndāvana in the following way, “*vṛndasya samūhasya, avanam rakṣaṇam pālanaṁ yasmāt tat vṛndāvanam* – that place which maintains, nourishes and protects everyone is called Vṛndāvana.” This land of Vṛndāvana conceals its godly nature (*bhagavad-bhāva*) and lovingly maintains the herds of cows and calves, and the society of *gopas* and *gopīs*. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, being controlled by their love, does not leave Vṛndāvana even for a moment: *vṛndāvanam parityajya sa kvacin naiva gacchati* (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya-līlā* 1.67; quoted in *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.5.461).

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa describes the land of Vraja as enchanting, and expresses this with exquisite feelings:

*brajbhūmi mohinī maiṅ jānī
mohinī kuñj, mohan śrī-bṛndāvan mohan jamunā pānī
mohinī nāri sakal gokul kī bolti mohinī bānī
śrī-bhaṭṭ ke prabhu mohan nāgar mohinī rādhā rānī*

“Vraja-bhūmi is enchanting – the groves are enchanting, Śrī Vṛndāvana is enchanting and the waters of the Yamunā are enchanting. All the women in every part of Gokula are enchantresses who speak in an enchanting way. Śrī Bhaṭṭa’s master and mistress are Mohana Nāgara and Mohinī Rādhārānī.”

Endnotes

- ¹ *śrī-vṛndāvanasya prakāśa-viśeṣo golokatvaṁ; tatra prāpañcika-loka-prakaṣa-līlavakāśatvenāvabhāsamānaḥ prakāśo goloka iti samarthanīyam*
- ² During *Brahmā-vimohana-līlā* (the bewilderment of Lord Brahmā) Śrī Kṛṣṇa assumed the form of all the calves and cowherd boys for one full year, thereby bewildering the four-headed Lord Brahmā.



THE BORDERS OF VRAJA



raja-maṇḍala extends for about 168 miles (eighty-four *kosas*). *Garga-saṁhita* (*khaṇḍa* 2) states:

*prāgudīcyāṁ bahirśado
dakṣiṇasyāṁ yadoḥ purāt
paścimāyāṁ śoṇitapurān
māthuraṁ maṇḍalaṁ viduḥ*

“That land between Bahirśad (Barhada) in the north-east, Yadupura (the village Baṭeśvara of Śūrasena) in the south and Śoṇitpura (Sonhada) in the west, and which measures eighty-four *kosas*, has been called Mathurā-maṇḍala, or Vraja, by learned persons.”

F.S. Growse in his *Mathurā – A District Memoir* quotes the following verse:

*it barhad it sonhad ut sūrsen kā gāon
braj caurāsī kos meṁ mathurā maṇḍal māṅh*

“On one side is Bara, on another side, Sona and on the third side is the town of Sūrsena; these are the limits of the Braj Chaurāsi, the Mathurā circle.”

It is clear from this couplet, that Bara marks the boundary of one side of Vraja, Sonhada marks another side, and Baṭeśvara, or the village of Śūrasena, marks the boundary on the third side. Bara is situated in the present district of Aligarh in the north-east corner of Vraja-manḍala. Sonhada lies in the present district of Guragaon in the state of Harayānā, which is in the north-west corner of Vraja-manḍala. Its ancient name is Soṇitpura. The village of Śūrasena is the village of Baṭeśvara in the revenue district of Bāha. The area between these places is called Vraja-manḍala.

The borders of Vraja-manḍala are also mentioned in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*.¹ According to this Purāṇa, Hāsyavana lies in the east of Vraja-manḍala, Janhuvana in the south, Parvatavana in the west and Sūryapattanavana in the north. Corresponding to this description, Hasanagaḍha of the Agra district, which lies in the east, is known as Hāsyavana; in the west, Bahāḍī-grāma near Kāmyavana in Rājasthāna is known as Parvatavana; in the south, Jājaū-grāma of the Dhaulapura revenue district is famous as Janhu; and in the north, near Jevara-grāma of the Aligarh district, lies Sūryapattanavana.

In the eighty-four *kosas* of Vraja-manḍala, there are forty-eight different forests (*vanas*), which includes *upavanas* (sub-forests), *prativanas* and *adhivanas*. According to the *Padma Purāṇa*, there are twelve principal forests situated east and west of the Yamunā. They are (1) Mahāvana, (2) Kāmyavana, (3) Madhuvana, (4) Tālavana, (5) Kumudavana, (6) Bhāṇḍīravana, (7) Vṛndāvana, (8) Khadīravana, (9) Lohavana, (10) Bhadravana, (11) Bahulāvana and (12) Baelvana. Of these twelve forests, seven lie on the western side of the Yamunā – Madhuvana, Tālavana, Kumudavana, Bahulāvana, Kāmyavana, Khadīravana and Vṛndāvana. The

remaining five – Bhadravana, Bhāṇḍīrvana, Baelvana, Lohavana and Mahāvana – are situated on the Yamunā's eastern side.

The *Varāha Purāṇa* mentions twelve *upavanas*: (1) Brahmavana, (2) Apsarāvana, (3) Vihvalavana, (4) Kadambavana, (5) Svarṇavana, (6) Surabhivana, (7) Premavana, (8) Mayūravana, (9) Māneṅgitavana, (10) Śeṣaśāyīvana, (11) Nāradavana and (12) Paramānandavana.

The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* mentions the following twelve *prativanas*: (1) Raṅkavana, (2) Vārttāvana, (3) Karahāvana, (4) Kāmavana, (5) Añjanavana, (6) Karṇavana, (7) Kṛṣṇākṣipānavana, (8) Nandaprekṣaṇa Kṛṣṇavana, (9) Indravana, (10) Śikṣāvana, (11) Candrāvalivana and (12) Lohavana.

Finally, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* describes the following twelve *adhivanas*: (1) Mathurā, (2) Rādhā-kuṇḍa, (3) Nandagaon, (4) Gaḍha, (5) Lalitā-grāma, (6) Vṛṣabhānupura, (7) Gokula, (8) Balabhadravana, (9) Govardhana, (10) Jāvaṭa, (11) Vṛndāvana and (12) Saṅketvana. This adds up to forty-eight forests in all.

Endnote

¹ *caturdikṣa pramāṇena pūrvādikramatogaṇat
pūrvabhāge sthitam koṇam vanam hāsyābhidhānaka
bhāge ca dakṣiṇe koṇam śubham janhuvanām sthitam
bhāge ca pāścime koṇe parvatākhyavanām sthitam
bhāge hyuttarakoṇasyam sūrya patana sañjñakam
ityetā vraja maryādā catuṣkoṇābhidhāyini*



HOW TO OBSERVE VRAJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Vow at Viśrāma-ghāṭa



efore starting Vraja-manḍala *parikramā*, one should take a vow (*sankalpa*) at Viśrāma-ghāṭa in Mathurā. This vow should be made through the medium of a Vaiṣṇava devoted to *bhajana*, any devotee, *tīrtha-guru* or Vrajavāsī priest who is simple-hearted, learned in the scriptures and philosophical principles, virtuous, merciful, non-envious and non-avaricious. When the vow is taken, *parikramā* may begin.

The rules for Vraja-manḍala *parikramā*

While performing *parikramā*, one should as far as possible observe certain positive and negative injunctions. The positive injunctions are as follows: to speak the truth, to observe celibacy, to sleep on the ground, to forgive the offences of others, to take bath in the holy rivers or ponds, to do *ācamana*, to accept only *prasāda* offered to the Supreme Lord, and to perform *harināma-kīrtana* on *tulasī* beads or perform *harināma-saṅkīrtana* in the



Taking vow at Viśrāma-gḥāṭa

assembly of Vaiṣṇavas. One should perform the *parikramā* by properly respecting and worshipping the *brāhmaṇas*, deities, sacred places and the Supreme Lord's pastime places encountered during the course of the *parikramā*.

Coming now to the negative injunctions – it is prohibited to become angry; to commit any violence towards trees, creepers, small shrubs, cows and so forth along the *parikramā* path; to dishonour *brāhmaṇas*, Vaiṣṇavas and so on; to disrespect the deities; to use soap and oil; to shave; to kill ants and other living entities; to involve oneself in disputes; and to criticize others.

The timing of the *parikramā*

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas follow Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's own journey through Vraja. Hence, some people start their *parikramā* after Vijayā-daśamī in the month of Āśvina (October–November) in autumn. This is because, according to Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta*,

HOW TO OBSERVE VRAJA-MAṆḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Śrīman Mahāprabhu arrived from Śrī Nīlācala-dhāma (Jagannātha Puri) at this time to have *darśana* of Vraja-maṇḍala. Other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas start their *parikramā* and *kārtika-vrata niyama-sevā* on the Ekādaśī of the bright fortnight in the month of Āśvina and complete their vow on Devotthāna-ekādaśī of the bright fortnight in the month of Kārtika. Most Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, however, make their vow for both Kārtika *niyama-sevā* (or *ūrjā-vrata*) and Vraja-*maṇḍala parikramā* on Śāradīyā-pūrṇimā. They then complete the *kārtika-vrata* and Vraja-*maṇḍala parikramā* after Devotthāna-ekādaśī on Kārtika-pūrṇimā.

The Vaiṣṇavas of the Nimbārka *sampradāya* start Vraja-*maṇḍala parikramā* on the Daśamī after Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī. They complete their *parikramā* in one-and-a-half months. The Vaiṣṇavas of Puṣṭīmārga (the Vallabha *sampradāya*) start their *parikramā* on the Daśamī or Ekādaśī after Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī and complete it in approximately two months.



PLACES VISITED ON VRAJA-MANḌALA PARIKAMĀ



ilgrims on Vraja-manḍala *parikramā* have *darśana* of the pastime places of Vraja-manḍala in the order given below. Some places appear more than once in this list, because there are often alternative routes to get from one place to another.

Vraja-manḍala *parikramā* begins in Śrī Mathurā. After having *darśana* of this city, pilgrims visit the forests of Madhavana, Tālavana and Kumudavana. Then they proceed to Śāntanu-kuṇḍa, Gandheśvara, Bahulāvana, Rāl, Magherā, Jaita, Śakaṭīkarā (Chattīkarā) and Garuḍa-Govinda. From Garuḍa-Govinda, one can go to Bahulāvana if one has not already done so. Pilgrims then visit Maro, Datihā (Datīyā), Aḍiga, Mādhurī-kuṇḍa, Jakhīna-gaon, Toṣa, Janatī, Vasati, Mukharāī, Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

After this, pilgrims make their way to Kusuma-sarovara, Nārada-kuṇḍa, Gvālā-puṣkarīṇi, Yugala-kuṇḍa, Killola-kuṇḍa,

Mānasi-gaṅgā, the town of Govardhana, Indradhvaja-vedī and Jamunāvati. From there, one proceeds to Pārāsaulī, Paiṭhā-gaon and Bacha-gaon (Vatsavana), and then to Ānyora-gaon, Gaurī-kuṇḍa, Saṅkaraṣaṇa-kuṇḍa, Govinda-kuṇḍa, Navala-kuṇḍa, Apsarā-kuṇḍa, Śakra-kuṇḍa, Pūñcharī, Śyāma-ḍhāka, Rāghava Paṇḍita's cave, Surabhi-kuṇḍa, Airāvata-kuṇḍa, Haraji-kuṇḍa, Jatīpurā, Bilachu-kuṇḍa and Cakreśvara Mahādeva.

Thereafter, one comes to Sakhī-sthalī, Nīma-gaon, Pāḍara, Kuñjerā, Pāli, Ḍerāvāli, Māna, Sāhāra, Sūrya-kuṇḍa, Peraku, Bhādāra, Konāi and Vasati. One can now take *darśana* of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Govardhana if one has not already done so. Pilgrims then make their way to Jāvaka-kuṇḍa, Gulāla-kuṇḍa, Gāñṭholī, Beheja, Devaśīrṣa, Muniśīrṣa, Paramādanā, Badrī-nārāyaṇa, Guhānā, Khoṅ, Ālipura, Ādi-badrī, Paśopā, Kedāranātha, Bilonda, Caraṇa-pahāḍī, Bhojana-thāli and Kāmyavana.

After Kāmyavana, one goes to Vajerā, Sunaharā Kadambakhaṇḍī, Ūñcāgaon, Sakhīgiri-parvata, Varsānā, Gahvaravana, Ḍabhorā, Rasolī, Prema-sarovara, Saṅket, Riṭhaura, Meherāna, Satvāsa, Nanderā, Bhojana-thāli, Nunerā, Śṛṅgāraṇa, Bichoravana, Vanacarī, Hoḍal, Dahīgaon, Lālpura, Kāmera, Harāvāli-gaon, Sāñculī, Geṇḍo, Nandagaon, Kadamba-ṭer and Jāvata. Thereafter, pilgrims visit Dhanaśiṅgā, Kosī, Payagaon, Chattravana, Narī-Semari, Sāñkhī, Ārabāḍī, Raṇavāḍī, Bhādāvāli, Khāmpura, Ūmrāva, Raheyā, Kāmāi, Karehlā, Pesāi, Ludhaurī, Āñjanauka, Khadīravana and Bijavārī. One can now also visit Nandagaon if one has not already done so.

Pilgrims now make their way to Kokilāvana, Choṭī-baiṭhana, Baḍī-baiṭhana, Caraṇa-pahāḍī, Rasaulī, Koṭvana, Khāmī, Śeśasāi, Rūpanagara, Majhāi, Rāmapura, Ūjānī, Khelanavana, Obe, Rāmaghāṭa, Kāśraṭa, Akṣayaṇa, Gopī-ghāṭa (Tapovana), Cīra-ghāṭa, Nanda-ghāṭa and Bhaya-gaon. After this come Jaitapura, Hājarā, Balihārā, Bājanā, Jeolāi, Śakaroyā, Āṭāsa, Devīāṭāsa, Parkhama, Caumā, Ajāi, Siñhānā, Rehānā, Pasaulī, Baraulī, Taraulī, Eī, Seī, Māi and Basāi.

PLACES VISITED ON VRAJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Thereafter, one crosses the Yamunā to have *darśana* of Bhadravana, Bhāṇḍīravana, Māṭa, Baelvana, Māna-sarovara, Ārā, Pānīgaon, Lohavana, Rāval, Gaḍhuī, Āyaro, Kṛṣṇapura, Bāndī, Dāūjī, Hātaurā, Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa, Cintāharaṇa-ghāṭa, Mahāvana, Gokula, Kailo and Bādāi-grāma. Crossing the Yamunā again, one comes to Nauraṅgābād, Mathurā, Akrūra-ghāṭa and Vṛndāvana with its twelve forests – Bhātrol (Aṭalavana), Kyārīvana, Vihāravana, Gocāraṇavana, Kālīya-damanavana, Gopālavana, Nikuṅjavana (Sevā-kuṅja), Nidhuvana, Rādhāvana (Rādhā-bāga), Jhūlanavana, Gahvaravana and Papaḍavana.

Vraja-manḍala's sixteen banyan trees

On their journey through Vraja-manḍala, pilgrims may be fortunate enough to have *darśana* of the following prominent banyan trees (*vaṭas*):

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| (1) Vaṁśīvaṭa – Vṛndāvana | (9) Manoramavaṭa |
| (2) Vaṁśīvaṭa – Bhāṇḍīravana | (10) Āśāvaṭa |
| (3) Saṅketvaṭa | (11) Aśokavaṭa |
| (4) Bhāṇḍīravaṭa | (12) Kelivaṭa |
| (5) Jāvaṭa | (13) Brahmavaṭa |
| (6) Śrīvaṭa | (14) Rudravaṭa |
| (7) Jaṭājuṭavaṭa | (15) Śrīdharavaṭa |
| (8) Kāmavaṭa | (16) Sāvitrivaṭa |

Mountains in Vraja-manḍala

Pilgrims on Vraja-manḍala *parikramā* will visit or pass close by the following hills or mountains (*parvatas*):

- (1) Girirāja-Govardhana
- (2) Setu-kandarā-parvata – Ādi-badrī-nārāyaṇa
- (3) Sāṅgrāśīkara-parvata – Jhūlana-sthāna
- (4) Nīla-parvata – near Śāṅarā-śikhara
- (5) Ānandādrī-parvata – near Śāṅarā-śikhara
- (6) Udyāna-parvata
- (7) Śaṅkhakūṭa-parvata

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

- (8) Ādi Kedāranātha-parvata – near Kāmyavana
- (9) Caraṇa-pahāḍī – Kāmyavana
- (10) Indrasena-parvata (a stone slide) – Kāmyavana
- (11) Vyomāsura-gufā (a cave) – Kāmyavana
- (12) Bhojana-thālī – Kāmyavana
- (13) Viṣṇu-cihna-pāda-parvata – Kāmyavana
- (14) Luklukī-kandarā – Kāmyavana
- (15) Bajani-śilā (a musical stone) – Kāmyavana
- (16) Suvarṇācala – Sunaharā-gaon
- (17) Caraṇa-pahāḍī – Nandagaon
- (18) Aṭorā-parvata – Ūñcāgaon
- (19) Sakhīgiri-parvata – Ūñcāgaon
- (20) Viṣṇu-parvata – Varsānā
- (21) Brahma-parvata – Varsānā
- (22) Nandiśvara, or Rudra-parvata – Nandagaon
- (23) Choṭī (small) Caraṇa-pahāḍī – near Baiṭhana



Part Two







*“Mathurā-dhāma is blessed,
being superior even to
Vāikunṭha, the holy abode of
Śrī Nārāyaṇa. By residing
in Mathurā for only one day
a person attains devotion to
Lord Hari, and by residing
here three nights, one attains
that most rare love of God,
which is difficult to obtain
even for great liberated souls.”*





Mathurā







THE GLORIES OF ŚRĪ MATHURĀ



here are seven holy cities on the Earth that award liberation – Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyāpurī (Haridvāra), Kāśī, Kāñcī, Avantīkā (Ujjain) and Dvārāvātī (Dvārakā). Of these, Mathurā, the birthplace of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa-candra, is the topmost. This abode not only awards liberation, but also bestows love of God (*bhagavat-prema*). Mathurā is the Supreme Lord's abode consisting of eternity, knowledge and bliss and it is completely beyond the illusory energy. It is protected by the Sudarśana *cakra*¹, and is therefore not affected by the universal dissolution or other disruptions. What to speak of Vaikuṅṭha, it is even more praiseworthy than Dvārakā, which is ornamented by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's queens.²

This city of Mathurā is never annihilated. In the beginning of Satya-yuga, the child Dhruva met Devarṣi Nārada here. Dhruva took bath in the Yamunā at Dhruva-ghāṭa (in Mathurā) and accepted the *nāma-mantra* of the Lord from Nārada

Muni. Nearby at Madhuvana-Maholī, he attained perfection by worshipping Bhagavān.

Also in Satya-yuga, Durvāsā Ṛṣi arrived here while the devotee Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was in the course of breaking his vow of observing Ekādaśī and Dvādaśī, and it was here that Durvāsā realised Ambarīṣa Mahārāja's glory. Even today, Cakra-tīrtha and Ambarīṣa-ṭilā stand as witnesses to how Ambarīṣa Mahārāja was protected by the Sudarśana *cakra*.

In Tretā-yuga, on the order of Śrī Rāmacandra, Śrī Śatrughna killed the son of the demon Madhu, Lavaṅāsura, here. This pastime is well-known. In Dvāpara-yuga, Mathurā became famous as the place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's appearance and the site of His many pastimes. It is also well known that Śrī Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa took birth here on an island in the Yamunā.

In Kali-yuga the Supreme Lord Śacīnandana Śrī Gaurahari, resplendent with the lustre and inner sentiments of Śrī Rādhā, came to take *darśana* of Vraja-dhāma. First He reached Mathurā, where He took bath at Viśrāma-ghāṭa, and then visited the pastime places within the eighty-four *kosas* of Vraja-maṇḍala. Gauḍīya literature describes that Śrī Advaita Ācārya, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī and Śrī Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī arrived in Mathurā before Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's intimate associates, such as Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Sanātana and other *gosvāmīs*, came to Mathurā and Vraja after Him and roamed throughout the land. Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Bhakti-ratnākara* further describe that later all our Gauḍīya *ācāryas* came to Mathurā Vraja-maṇḍala.

The abundant glories of Mathurā are described in the Purāṇas. Bhagavān Śrī Keśavadeva is present in the heart of this abode, which is likened to the whorl of a lotus. On the northern petal, in Vṛndāvana, is Śrī Govindadeva by whose *darśana* a person is forever liberated from the cycle of birth and death. On the eastern petal, at Viśrāma-ghāṭa, is the form of the Lord named Viśrānti, and on the southern petal is Ādi-varāhadeva, who bestows all-perfection.³

Bathing in any of Mathurā's sacred waters destroys all the sins of any living entity, and each and every step taken in Mathurā gives the same result as performing a horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha-yajña*). The Supreme Lord Himself says in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*: "O Vasundharā, certainly, in all the three worlds – the hellish planets, the world of humans and the celestial realm – nowhere is as dear to Me as Mathurā."⁴ He further states in the same *Purāṇa*: "O Vasundharā, during Cāturmāsya, My time of sleep, all the oceans, lakes and places of pilgrimage dwell in Mathurā."⁵

Skanda Purāṇa mentions that the result attained by residing in any other part of Bhāratavarṣa (India) for hundreds and thousands of years is attained simply by remembering the city of Mathurā.⁶ Whoever chants and fasts in Mathurā becomes free from sin by taking *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's birthplace.⁷ A sinful person who has killed a *brāhmaṇa*, who is a drunkard, who kills cows, or who has violated celibacy, becomes free of these sins merely by circumambulating Mathurā. All those who come from other far-off places to perform Mathurā *parikramā* and to have *darśana* of the pastime places here become free from all kinds of sins. Not only that, if one simply takes a vow to reside in Mathurā, he becomes free from all kinds of material entanglements.

It is written in the *Padma Purāṇa* that one who desires to have *darśana* of Mathurā, but leaves his body before getting this opportunity, will surely take birth in Mathurā in a future life.⁸ There is not the slightest doubt about this. Only those with firm, unshakeable devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and who are the objects of His abundant mercy, can have attachment to this Mathurāpurī, which is beyond the material world.⁹

In *Vāyu Purāṇa* it is written that Mathurā-maṇḍala is within the eighty-four *kosas* of Vraja-maṇḍala, and that the Supreme Lord Śrī Hari Himself eternally resides here.¹⁰ The *Vāyu Purāṇa* further states that "Mathurā-dhāma is blessed, being superior even to Vaikuṅṭha, the holy abode of Śrī Nārāyaṇa. By residing in Mathurā for only one day a person attains devotion to Lord Hari, and by

Mathurā

To Govardhana

To Delhi

-
1. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janma-sthāna
 2. Potrā-kuṇḍa
 3. Viśrāma-ghāṭa
 4. Prayāga-tīrtha
 5. Beṅgālī-ghāṭa
 6. Dhruva-tīrtha
 7. Ṛṣi-tīrtha
 8. Asi-kuṇḍa
 9. Soma-tīrtha
 10. Sarasvatī-patana-tīrtha
 11. Cakra-tīrtha
 12. Gokarṇa-tīrtha,
Gokarṇa Mahādeva
 13. Pīpaleśvara Mahādeva
 14. Raṅgabhūmi,
Raṅgeśvara
Mahādeva, Kāmsa-ṭīla
 15. Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha
 16. Bhūteśvara Mahādeva,
Pātāla-devī
 17. Jñāna-vāpī
 18. Mahāvidyā-devī
 19. Dīrgha-Viṣṇu
 20. Mathurā-devī,
Śrī Padmanābhajī
 21. Ādivarāha Temple
 22. Dvārākadiśa Temple



residing here three nights, one attains that most rare love of God, which is difficult to obtain even for great liberated souls.”¹¹

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written in *Śrī Mathurā-māhātmya*: “O Avanti, become ready with a spittoon in your hands. O Māyāpurī (Haridvāra), become ready to fan with a *cāmara*. O Kāñci, take an umbrella in your hand. O Kāśī, hold wooden sandals in your hands and be ready. O Ayodhyā, do not be afraid any more. O Dvārakā, do not chant any prayers today. This Mathurā-devī, who today has become the chief queen of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the great King of kings, is pleased with all of you maidservants.”¹²

ŚRĪ KṚṢṆA'S BIRTHPLACE

(Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janma-sthāna)

Around 5,200 years ago, at the end of the last Dvāpara-yuga, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra appeared as the son of Śrī Vasudeva and Devakī in the prison house of the brutal King Kāmsa. Seeing the child's divine and wondrous four-armed form, the colour of a dark rain cloud, Vasudeva and Devakī began glorifying Him. In His four hands He held a conch shell, a disc, a club and a lotus flower; on His chest was the mark of Śrīvatsa; and the Kaustubha jewel hung round His neck. In response to Vasudeva and Devakī's prayers, the Supreme Lord assumed the form of a newborn baby boy, and somehow urged Vasudeva to take Him in his arms and carry Him to Nanda-bhavana, the home of Nanda Mahārāja, in Gokula-Mahāvana. So that Vasudeva could escape with the divine baby, his hand cuffs and foot-shackles fell open, the guards fell into a deep sleep, and the great iron doors of the prison swung open of their own accord. Although the night was stormy and the Yamunā was filled with roaring waves, the way cleared before Vasudeva and he safely reached Gokula.

That night, in Nanda-bhavana, Yaśodā had given birth to two-armed Śyāmasundara, and a few moments later to a baby



Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janma-sthāna

girl, Yogamāyā. Because of her heavy labour, Yaśodā had fallen unconscious. When Vasudeva entered the house with his baby, that two-armed Śyāmasundara assimilated Vasudeva's son within Himself, but Vasudeva could not understand what had happened. He picked up the baby girl in his arms and silently returned to Kāṁsa's prison. The prison doors closed automatically behind him, and his and Devakī's shackles slipped back in place. When Kāṁsa received word that a child had been born to Vasudeva and Devakī, he stormed into the prison, sword in hand, and snatched the baby girl from the arms of his sister, Devakī. Swinging the baby by the legs he tried to dash her against the surface of a stone, but she rose into the sky and turned into the eight-armed goddess Durgā. After rebuking Kāṁsa she disappeared.

Śrī Vajranābha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson¹³, established an extensive temple at Śrī Kṛṣṇa's birthplace. Over the centuries, religious kings of India successively built temples at the same



Deities of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa (middle)
with Vāsudeva (left) and Devakī (right)

location. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu arrived in Vraja there was a grand temple here. Seeing Mahāprabhu's sweet dancing born from transcendental ecstatic love, and hearing His sweet *kīrtana*, hundreds of thousands of people assembled here, and became overwhelmed with ecstasy.

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to this place, He saved Subuddhi Rāya, a king of Bengal, by stopping him from committing suicide. He then made him into a great devotee of the Lord. Subuddhi Rāya had been ostracised from his caste by an extremist Muslim ruler in Bengal. Though Subuddhi Rāya wanted to become a Hindu again, the dogma of the priestly castes decreed that there was no path by which he could re-enter Hinduism before his death. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the ocean of mercy, met Subuddhi Rāya, He asked him to utter the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa just once in order to become completely purified. Subuddhi Rāya followed Mahāprabhu's instruction, and performed *harināma-sankīrtana* and served the Vaiṣṇavas at this place for the rest of his days.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu arrived in Vraja during the rule of the Mughal emperor Humāyūn. The Muslims later destroyed the temple that was here at that time. In AD 1610, the king of Orchā, Mahārāja Vīrasinghdeva, constructed a grand temple for Ādikeśava at the cost of thirty-three hundred thousand *rupees*, but in AD 1669 the intolerant and fanatic ruler Aurangzeb destroyed it, and built a mosque in its place. The priests of Śrī Ādikeśava hid the ancient deity in Rājadhāna, a village seventeen miles from the present city of Īṭāvā, in the district of Kānpura. Today, this same deity resides in a small temple in Rājadhāna, and a *pratibhū-vigraha*¹⁴ continues to be worshipped in the Ādikeśava Temple in Mallapurā, behind the present Janma-sthāna. This Ādikeśava deity is unique in that His body is decorated with the symbols of the twenty-four incarnations of Bhagavān. Vaiṣṇavas visit this temple because they consider this the deity of Śrī Ādikeśava.



*Pratibhū-vighraha of Śrī Ādikesava
(in the Ādikesava Temple in Mallapurā)*



Potrā-kuṇḍa

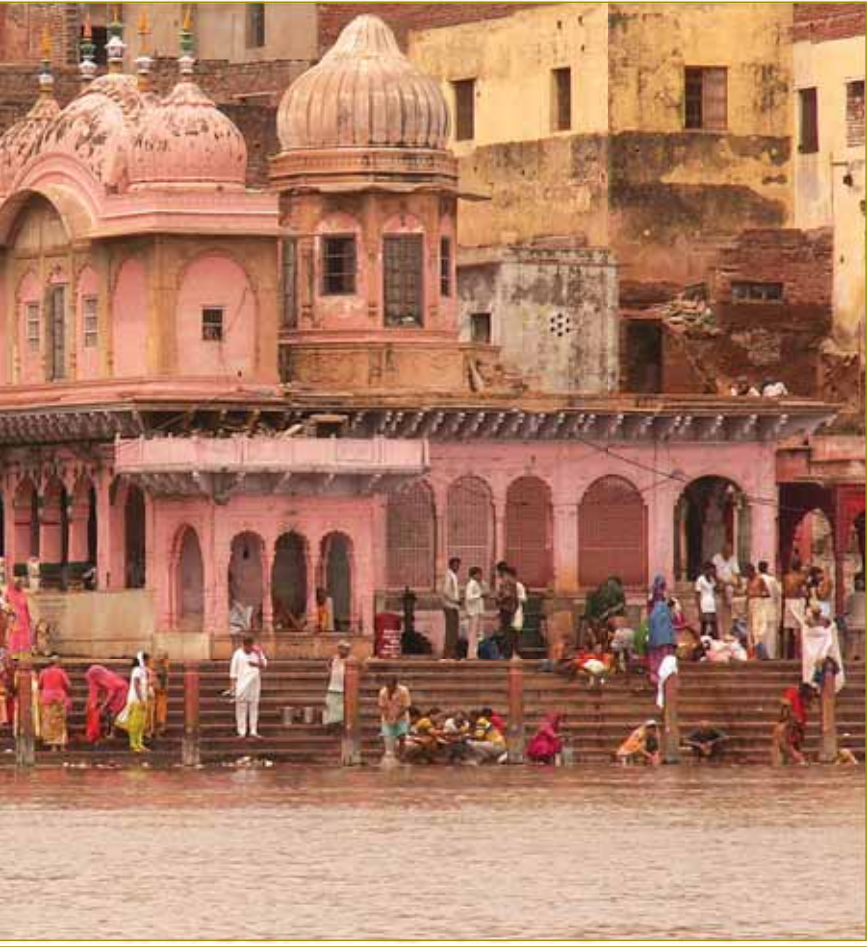
A magnificent temple has now been constructed at the birthplace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa at Keśava-kaṭāra, with funds raised by Śrī Madana-mohana Mālavīya. He did this on the direction of the late Śrī Hanumān Prasāda Poddāra of Gītā Press in Gorakhpur, and with the contribution of Śrī Ḍālmīyā and other wealthy persons.

The birthplace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is within the Mallapurā area of Mathurā. Cānura and the other wrestlers (*mallas*) of Mahārāja Kāmsa lived here. There is a wide pond near here named Potrā-kuṇḍa, which was originally within the walls of Kāmsa's gigantic prison. Śrī Vasudeva and Devakī would bathe here, and it is said that Devakī's clothes were washed here after the delivery of her sons. The pond was formerly called Pavitrā-kuṇḍa (*pavitrā* meaning "pure"), but in the course of time, it became known as Potrā-kuṇḍa.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Viśrāma-ghāṭa
as seen from the Yamunā



Viśrāma-ghāṭa

The famous Viśrāma-ghāṭa is the principal ghāṭa of Mathurā. According to the *Saura Purāṇa*, this sacred place is named Viśrānti-tīrtha for the following reason:

*tato viśrānti tīrthākhyam tīrthamaho vināśanam
saṁsāra maru sañcāra kleśa viśrāntidaṁ nṛṇāṁ*

“Wandering throughout the desert of material existence, living entities suffer the threefold miseries of life. They are without shelter in all respects, and become thoroughly exhausted by many kinds of afflictions. When they bathe in the waters of this eminent place of pilgrimage, which have bathed Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, they experience tranquillity (*viśrāma*). For this reason, the name of this sacred place is Viśrānti or Viśrāma-ghāṭa.”

It is said that after the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed the mighty Kaṁsa, He had Kaṁsa’s funeral rites performed at Dhruva-ghāṭa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as well as His relatives and friends, then bathed at this holy *ghāṭa*, and rested here. In His human-like pastimes, Śrī Kṛṣṇa may need to rest, but that Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is the Supreme Lord, who has an eternal form, full of knowledge and bliss, who is full of all the six opulences and who is endowed with all potencies that can make the impossible possible, never needs any rest. This Viśrāma-ghāṭa serves as a place of rest for the distressed living entities who have strayed from the Lord and are immersed in the endless and bottomless ocean of birth and death.

Every year, before starting Vraja-manḍala *parikramā*, hundreds of thousands of devout pilgrims bathe, perform *ācamana* and then take vows at this eminent place of pilgrimage. They also complete their *parikramā* here.

On the day of Yama-dvitiyā (or Bhaiyādūja), the second day after the night of the new moon (*Amāvasyā*) in Kārtika, many faithful and pious people from far-off places come to bathe at this place. According to the Purāṇas, Yama (*Dharmarāja*) and Yamī (*Yamunā*) are twins. Soft-hearted Yamunā could not endure seeing the various suffering of the living beings, and wished for a way to alleviate them. On her birthday she invited her brother to a meal of many delicious preparations and sweetmeats. Pleased and fully satisfied, Yama told her to ask for a boon. Yamunā said, “Brother, please grant those who bathe in my waters with faith

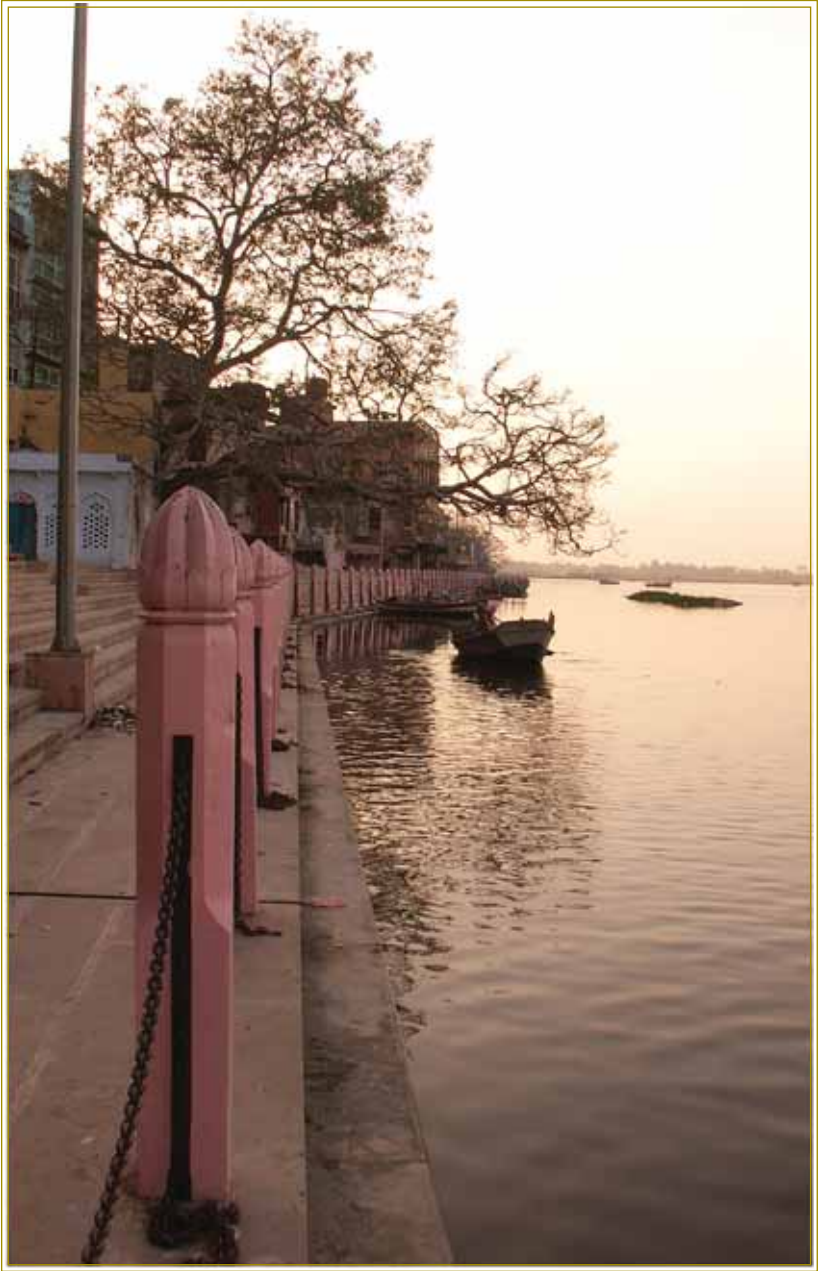


*Deities of Śrī Śyāmasundara and Yamunā-devī
at Viśrāma-ghāṭa*

on this day, relief from the clutches of birth and death and from the variegated threefold miseries.” Hearing this, Yama Mahārāja replied, “So be it!”

Although it is very glorious to bathe anywhere in Śrī Yamunā, it is especially glorious to do so in Vraja, and even more so at Viśrāma-ghāṭa on the day of Yama-dvitiyā. Therefore, every year on this day, thousands of brothers and sisters come here to bathe.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ





The Yamunā's Twenty-Four Ghāṭas

In Mathurā, Śrī Yamunā flows in a crescent shape, and Viśrāma-ghāṭa is in the centre. On her southern side lie the following twelve *ghāṭas*: (1) Avimukta-tīrtha, (2) Guhya-tīrtha, (3) Prayāga-tīrtha, (4) Kankhala-tīrtha, (5) Tinduka-tīrtha, (6) Sūrya-tīrtha, (7) Baṭa-svāmī-tīrtha, (8) Dhruva-tīrtha, (9) Ṛṣi-tīrtha, (10) Mokṣa-tīrtha, (11) Koṭi-tīrtha and (12) Bodhi-tīrtha. The following twelve *ghāṭas* lie on her northern side: (13) Nava-tīrtha, (14) Saṃyamana-tīrtha, (15) Dhārāpattana-tīrtha, (16) Nāga-tīrtha, (17) Ghaṅṭā-bharaṇaka-tīrtha, (18) Brahma-tīrtha, (19) Soma-tīrtha, (20) Sarasvatī-patana-tīrtha, (21) Cakra-tīrtha, (22) Dasāśvamedha-tīrtha, (23) Vighna-rāja-tīrtha and (24) Koṭi-tīrtha.

All the principal sacred places of India, even Prayāga, the king of all sacred places (*tīrtharāja*), worship the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa at the *ghāṭas* of Śrī Yamunā Mahārānī under her shelter. During Cāturmāsya especially, all the *tīrthas* come here to perform their worship.

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(1) Avimukta-tīrtha

At Avimukta-tīrtha Kāśī Viśvanātha Mahādeva worships the Lord. Those who bathe at this sacred place, or who leave their body here, very easily become free from material existence and reach the abode of Bhagavān.¹⁵

(2) Guhya-tīrtha

By bathing at Guhya-tīrtha one is liberated from the cycle of birth and death and attains the planet of the Lord.¹⁶

(3) Prayāga-tīrtha

Tīrtharāja Prayāga worships the Supreme Lord at Prayāga-tīrtha. Veṇī-Mādhava of Prayāga is eternally present at this place. Those who bathe here receive the result of performing all the sacrifices headed by the *agniṣṭoma-yajña*¹⁷ and attain Vaikuṅṭha-dhāma.¹⁸

(4) Kankhala-tīrtha

Mahādeva and Pārvatī are always devotedly worshipping Śrī Hari at Kankhala-tīrtha. Just as Mahādeva Śāṅkara bestowed

*Prayāga-tīrtha (left),
Bengālī-ghāṭa (middle),
Sūrya-tīrtha (right)*



mercy upon Prajāpati Dakṣa and liberated him from material existence, one who bathes here will attain Brahmaloḳa.¹⁹

(5) Tinduka-tīrtha

Tinduka-tīrtha is also named Guhya-tīrtha. By taking bath here one attains the abode of the Supreme Lord.²⁰ Nearby is Daṇḍī-ghāṭa, where Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu bathed and captivated everyone with His dancing and *saṅkīrtana*. This *ghāṭa* is now also called Bengālī-ghāṭa.

(6) Sūrya-tīrtha

At Sūrya-tīrtha, Sūryadeva, the Sungod, with his twelve different aspects (*dvādaśa-kalā*), is always absorbed in serving his worshipful deity, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Because of this, Mahārāja Bali, the son of Virocana, worshipped Sūryadeva here, and was granted his desired result. By taking bath at Sūrya-tīrtha on a Sunday, during *saṅkrānti*²¹, or at the time of a solar or lunar eclipse, one achieves the result of performing a *rājasūya-yajña*²², and after liberation attains the abode of the Supreme Lord.²³ A deity of Bali Mahārāja, along with his worshipful deity, Śrī Vāmanadeva, resides in a temple nearby.



(7) **Vaṭa-svāmī-tīrtha**

Another name for Sūryadeva is Vaṭa-svāmī. At Vaṭa-svāmī-tīrtha, he worships Lord Nārāyaṇa. Anyone who bathes here with faith on a Sunday, becomes healthy and wealthy, and at the end of life attains the supreme destination.²⁴

(8) **Dhruva-tīrtha**

After being pierced by the arrow-like words of Suruci, his step-mother, five-year-old Dhruva came to the forest at Dhruva-tīrtha on the advice of his mother, Sunīti. At this *ghāṭa* Dhruva met Devarṣi Nārada, who instructed him to bathe here and gave him a twelve-syllable *mantra*. Dhruva then journeyed to the isolated highlands of Madhuvana, where he worshipped the Supreme Lord by performing severe austerities, and finally received His *darśana*.



Dhruva-tīrtha

Those who bathe here are recognised on Dhruvaloka. When anyone's forefathers are offered *śrāddha*²⁵ at this place, they are granted results equivalent of offering *piṇḍa*²⁶ in Gayā.²⁷

Many esteemed personalities in the disciplic succession of the Nimbāditya *sampradāya* have lived here, the only remaining place of that ancient *sampradāya* in Vraja-maṇḍala.

(9) Ṛṣi-tīrtha

At Ṛṣi-tīrtha, Nara-Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi of Badrī-dhāma is always absorbed in the worship of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This holy place is situated south of Dhruva-tīrtha. A person who bathes here attains the planet of the Supreme Lord.²⁸

(10) Mokṣa-tīrtha

All the *tīrthas* of South India, such as Madurāi and Kanyākumārī, worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa at Mokṣa-tīrtha in Mathurāpurī. One who bathes at Mokṣa-tīrtha easily attains liberation in the form of service to Lord Viṣṇu's lotus feet.²⁹

(11) Koṭi-tīrtha

Millions upon millions of demigods (*koṭi-koṭi devas*) desire to worship the Supreme Lord at Koṭi-tīrtha. It is rare even for these demigods to be able to enter this place. One attains the planet of the Supreme Lord by bathing at Koṭi-tīrtha.³⁰

(12) Bodhi-tīrtha

At Bodhi-tīrtha, Lord Buddha gives the right understanding (*bodha*) of the living entities' inherent nature, namely devotion to the Supreme Lord. Therefore, this place is called Bodhi-tīrtha.³¹

It is said that in Tretā-yuga Rāvaṇa secretly performed austerities at Bodhi-tīrtha as a *nirviṣeṣa brahma-jñānī*, a sage with impersonal monistic knowledge of God. In his *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, he introduced this impersonal knowledge, also known as *bauddhavāda*, or Buddhism. Being a *brahmavādī* and *niḥśaktika*³²,

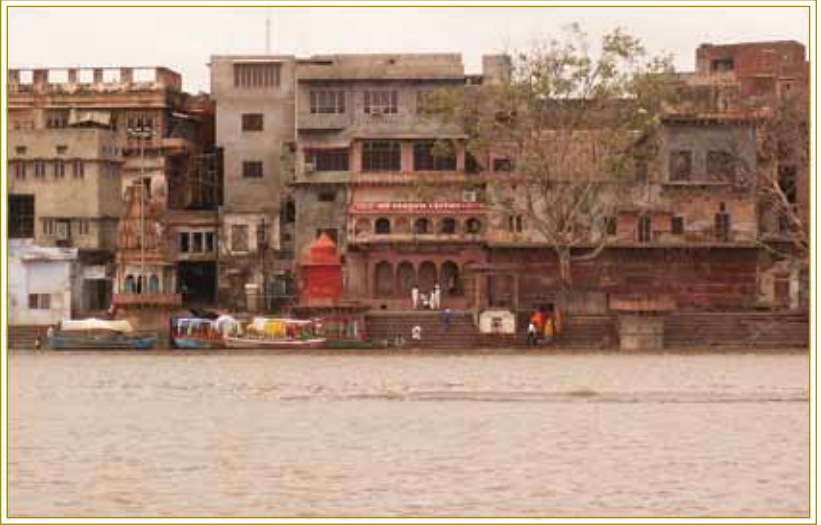
ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

he wanted to kidnap the wife of Lord Rāmacandra, Sītā-devī. In other words, he wanted to possess the potency (*śakti*) of the possessor of all powers (*sarva-śaktimān*). But Śrī Rāmacandra killed this *nirveśeṣa brahmavādī* along with his dynasty.

Simply by bathing at Bodhi-tīrtha, a man can easily deliver his forefathers and proceed to Pitṛloka, the planet of the forefathers. Fortunate souls reach the abode of the Supreme Lord by bathing here in the Yamunā.

(13) Nava-tīrtha

The twelve following *ghāṭas* (numbered 13 to 24) lie south of Viśrāma-ghāṭa. Nava-tīrtha is situated north of the famous Asi-kuṇḍa, or Askunḍa-ghāṭa, which lies near Viśrāma-ghāṭa. All the sins of those who bathe in Asi-kuṇḍa are destroyed, whether they are sins of body, mind or words. By taking bath at Nava-tīrtha, one's *bhakti* develops to newer and higher stages. There is no sacred place greater than this, nor will there ever be.³³



Askunḍa-ghāṭa

(14) Saṁyamana-tīrtha

The present name of this place is Svāmī-ghāṭa. Some say that Mahārāja Vasudeva crossed the Yamunā from here, carrying the newborn baby Kṛṣṇa in his arms. One who bathes here attains the abode of the Supreme Lord.³⁴

(15) Dhārāpatana-tīrtha

A person who bathes at Dhārāpatana-tīrtha enjoys all kinds of pleasures and is easily elevated to Svarga, the heavenly planets. One who leaves his body here goes to the abode of Bhagavān.³⁵

(16) Nāga-tīrtha

Nāga-tīrtha is best among the best of sacred places. By bathing here, one does not return to the material world.³⁶ Bhagavān Śeṣa (Anantadeva) is always present here to protect the *dhāma*. When Śrī Vasudeva Mahārāja carried newborn baby Kṛṣṇa across the Yamunā, Anantadeva shielded both of them from the pouring rain by spreading His unlimited hoods like an umbrella.

(17) Ghaṇṭā-bharaṇaka-tīrtha

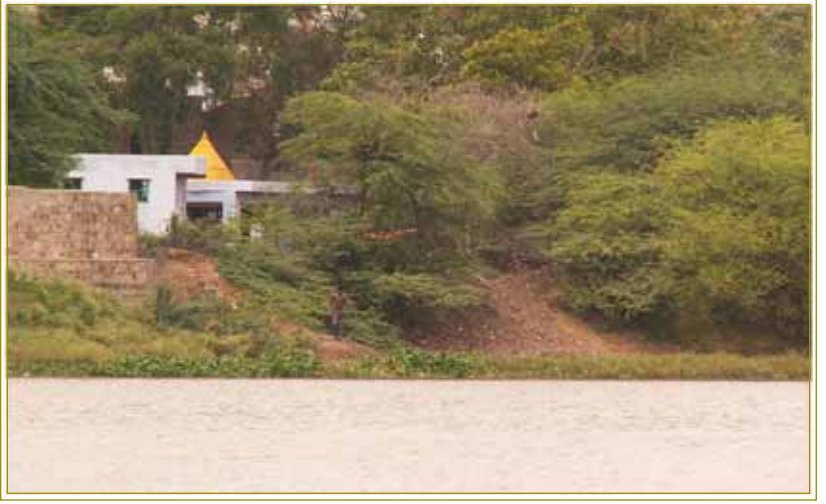
One who bathes at Ghaṇṭā-bharaṇaka-tīrtha is relieved from all kinds of sins and proceeds to Sūryaloka.³⁷

(18) Brahma-tīrtha

Lord Brahmā, the Grandfather of the universe, is present at Brahma-tīrtha and worships the Supreme Lord here. By taking bath, performing *ācamana*, drinking the Yamunā water or residing here, a person advances to Viṣṇuloka under the auspices of Brahmā. This place is called Brahma-tīrtha because of its connection with Lord Brahmā.³⁸

(19) Soma-tīrtha (Gau-ghāṭa)

Those who sprinkle themselves with the pure water of the Yamunā at Soma-tīrtha will have all their cherished desires fulfilled.³⁹



Gau-ghāṭa

(20) Sarasvatī-patana-tīrtha (Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā-ghāṭa)

Sarasvatī-patana-tīrtha lies near Gau-ghāṭa, or Soma-tīrtha. The river Sarasvatī used to meet the Yamunā here. Another name of the river Sarasvatī is Śrī Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā. This *tīrtha* is therefore also known as Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā-ghāṭa.

This *ghāṭa* is related to Śrī Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa. He took birth from Matsyagandhā Satyavatī and Maharṣi Pārāśara on an island in the Yamunā near here.

Some say that Śrī Vyāsadeva composed *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* here, and this is correct. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the treatise for the topmost transcendentalist, and is known as the *Paramahaṁsa-saṁhitā*. Vedavyāsa took instruction from Devarṣi Nārada. Through his practice of *bhakti-yoga*, he saw the Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and all His pastimes in Vraja, Mathurā and Dvārakā. How else could he have had *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and describe the sweetest of His sweetest pastimes without having performed worship in Vraja-dhāma, the sweetest of all sacred abodes? This is



Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā-ghāṭa



Island near Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā-ghāṭa

the opinion of learned devotees who are able to extract the essence of scripture.

One who bathes here is relieved from all types of sin and attains love of God. Even people of low caste become *paramahamsas*, or the best of devotees, by bathing here.⁴⁰

(21) Cakra-tīrtha

Cakra-tīrtha is famous throughout all Mathurā-manḍala. It is near Ambarīṣa-ṭilā, the place of Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, where he worshipped the Supreme Lord with all the limbs of pure devotion. Once, this devoted king was about to break his Ekādaśī fast at the auspicious moment on Dvādaśī when the sage Durvāsā arrived at his palace. The sage's behaviour towards King Ambarīṣa displeased Lord Viṣṇu's *cakra*, who chased Durvāsā around the universe for an entire year. Durvāsā fled even up to Brahmaloḥa and Śivaloḥa, but the *cakra* pursued him relentlessly. Finally, he reached Vaikuṅṭhaloḥa where Lord Viṣṇu advised him to go back to Ambarīṣa, fall at his feet and beg forgiveness. Durvāsā did so, and Ambarīṣa prayed to the *cakra* to spare Durvāsā. It was by these prayers that the *cakra* stopped, and the sage's life was spared.

One who bathes here is liberated from sin, even the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*. By the mercy of Sudarśana *cakra*, he will obtain *darśana* of the Supreme Lord and his life will become successful.⁴¹



Cakra-tīrtha

(22) Daśāśvamedha-tīrtha

Lord Brahmā performed ten (*daśa*) horse sacrifices (*aśvamedha-yajñas*) at Daśāśvamedha-tīrtha on the Yamunā. Devarṣi Nārada, the four Kumāras, and other sages always worship this place. Anyone who bathes here attains the abode of the Supreme Lord.⁴²

(23) Vighna-rāja-tīrtha

By bathing at Vighna-rāja-tīrtha, a person is liberated from all kinds of obstacles (*vighna*). Śrī Gaṇeśa, who removes any kind of obstacle, always resides here worshipping Bhagavān. For one who bathes at this place, all impediments to *bhakti* are removed by the mercy of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva in particular, and he attains the Supreme Lord's holy abode.⁴³

(24) Koṭi-tīrtha

By bathing at Koṭi-tīrtha, a person gets the result of donating *koṭi-koṭi*, or millions upon millions, of cows.⁴⁴ Nearby lies Gokarṇa-tīrtha. The well-known Gokarṇa released his brother Dhundhukārī from the life of a ghost by reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to him. Gokarṇa-tīrtha is the place of worship of this same Gokarṇa.⁴⁵

PLACES TO VISIT ON THE MATHURĀ PARIKRAMĀ PATH

Apart from the twenty-four *ghāṭas* just described, there are numerous other places of *darśana* on the ten-mile *parikramā* of Mathurā. Having started the *parikramā* at Viśrāma-ghāṭa, the first place one comes to is Pīpaleśvara Mahādeva.

Pīpaleśvara Mahādeva

Situated near Viśrāma-ghāṭa, in the eastern part of Mathurāpurī, Pīpaleśvara Mahādeva, one of the four area-protectors (*kṣetra-pālas*) of Mathurā, always protects the area of Mathurā. Thereafter, one



Pīpalesvara Mahādeva

can take *darśana* of Veṇī-Mādhava, Rāmeśvara, Dāūjī, Madana-mohana, Tinduka-tīrtha, Sūrya-ghāṭa and Dhruva-tīlā. Then, on Sapta-ṛṣi-tīlā one can have the sacred *darśana* of the seven sages: Atri, Marīci, Kratu, Aṅgīrā, Gautama, Vaśiṣṭha and Pulastya. These seven sages (*sapta ṛṣis*) reside in Mathurā-dhāma at this place, performing their worship of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Bali Mahārāja-tīlā

Here one can have *darśana* of Bali Mahārāja and Vāmanadeva. King Bali worshipped Lord Vāmanadeva at this place.

Akrūra-bhavana

A little further on lies the residence of Akrūrajī. He wanted to bring Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to his residence, but They stayed with Their father, Śrī Nanda Bābā, on the outskirts of Mathurā and promised to come to Akrūra after killing Kaṁsa.

Kubjā-kūpa (the well of Kubjā)

While wandering throughout Mathurā, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma met Kubjā, a maidservant of Kaṁsa, at this place. With great love Kubjā offered *āṅgarāga*, an application of ointments, to the limbs of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Just by touching her waist and chin with His hands, Śrī Kṛṣṇa transformed her into a teenage girl beautiful as a heavenly damsel. Looking at Him with shy, lust-filled eyes, Kubjā tried to take Him to her home. Śrī Kṛṣṇa promised to visit her upon completing His work and then He left. After killing Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa went to Kubjā's house with Uddhava and stayed there for some time, thus fulfilling her heart's desire.

Raṅga-bhūmi and Raṅgeśvara Mahādeva

In the southern part of Mathurā, Śrī Rāṅgeśvara is the protector of the *dhāma*. Conspiring to kill Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Mahārāja Kaṁsa, the destroyer of his own Bhoja dynasty, had a wrestling arena (*raṅgaśālā*) built here. Through cunning means, Kaṁsa



Raṅgeśvara Mahādeva

arranged for Akrūra to bring Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva from Nanda-Gokula. On the pretext of sight-seeing, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva reached this wrestling arena with the cowherd boys after asking various people for directions. The wrestling arena was beautifully decorated. Flowers bedecked splendid, arched gateways and the enormous bow of Śaṅkara was placed at the front of the arena. The mad elephant, Kuvalyāpīḍa, who had been trained to kill the two brothers, blocked the main entrance, waiting to receive a signal to kill Them. The deity of Raṅgeśvara Mahādeva had been beautifully decorated in various ways, and his splendour was astonishing.

When He entered the arena, Śrī Kṛṣṇa effortlessly picked up the bow with His left hand. In front of everyone, He strung the bow within a moment and pulled the string in such a way that the bow broke into pieces, making a thunderous sound. Both brothers easily killed all the soldiers who were protecting the bow. They then continued Their tour of the city and at sunset returned to Their camp.

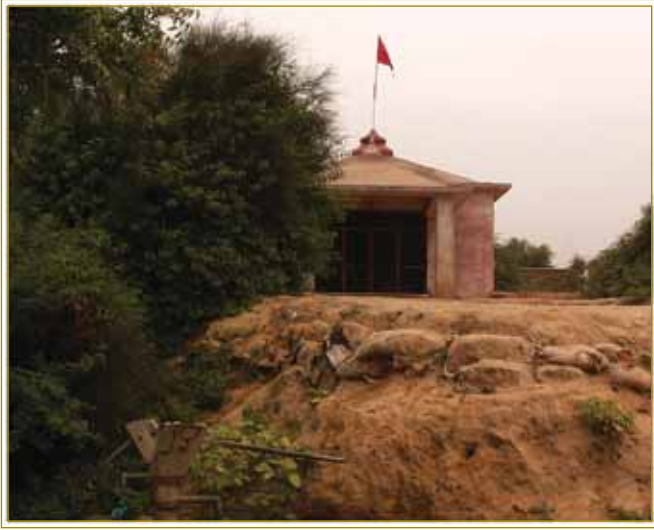
At dawn the next day the wrestling festival began. Many gigantic and fierce wrestlers, such as Cāṇūra, Muṣṭika, Śāla and Tośāla, were ready for the wrestling match inside the arena. Mahārāja Kaṁsa, together with his friends and prominent citizens, were seated on an elevated platform. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma returned to the arena, and after slaying Kuvalyāpīḍa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa pulled out the elephant's two tusks and used them to kill the elephant-keeper and other wicked people. Some soldiers ran to Mahārāja Kaṁsa to tell him about the incident. Grinding his teeth in anger, Kaṁsa signalled to Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika to quickly kill the two boys. Just then, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, smiling like two lion-cubs, reached the wrestling arena carrying the huge elephant-tusks on Their shoulders, Their bodies sprinkled with blood. Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika challenged the two brothers to wrestle by making gestures, like flexing their muscles, to display their power and strength. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the propagator of decent conduct, suggested that He and Balarāma fight with wrestlers Their own age; but to entertain



Mahārāja Kāmsa, Cānūra arrogantly challenged Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Muṣṭika challenged Balarāma. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in fact wanted. And so the fight began.

Considering this wrestling match to be immoral and improper, the women of the city stood up and prepared to leave. Beholding the sweetness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's form, they said, "Aah, in truth, only the land of Vraja is supremely sacred and blessed. The most exalted Supreme Person resides there, disguised as an ordinary human being. That Lord, whose lotus feet are worshipped by the god of gods, Mahādeva Śaṅkara, and by Lakṣmī, wanders about there in

*Deities of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma
with Kāmsa in the middle (left photo),
at Kāmsa-ṭīlā (below)*



great bliss, wearing a garland of many-coloured flowers. He plays His flute and performs various pastimes with Balarāma and His *sakhās* while tending the cows. This sweetness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's form is easily available only to the residents of Vṛndāvana, especially the *gopīs*. The peacocks, male and female parrots, cows, calves and rivers of Vraja are all blessed. They are satisfied by freely relishing Kṛṣṇa's variegated sweetness."

As the women of Mathurā were discussing this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa defeated and killed Cāṇūra and Balarāma defeated and killed Muṣṭika. Then the two brothers also killed Kūṭa, Śāla, Tośāla and

the other wrestlers. Kāmsa became furious and ordered that Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva, Nanda and Vasudeva be taken prisoners. However, in a moment and with great speed, Śrī Kṛṣṇa leapt onto the platform where Kāmsa was sitting. Grabbing him by the hair, Kṛṣṇa threw him to the ground. Kṛṣṇa then straddled Kāmsa's chest, and striking him with His fists, He caused Kāmsa's life-air to leave him like a bird in flight. Śrī Kṛṣṇa effortlessly and wonderfully slew Kāmsa and his associates in the wrestling arena. Seeing this spectacle (*raṅga*), Śaṅkara, whom Kāmsa had worshipped, became overjoyed. Hence, his name became Śrī Raṅgeśvara. To this day, Raṅga-bhūmi glorifies this colourful pastime of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

According to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Kāmsa was killed on the day of Śiva-rātri (Caturdaśī). Since Kāmsa had called Akrūra to his home for advice on the night of Ekādaśī, Akrūra had reached Nanda-bhavana on Dvādaśī, and on Trayodaśī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had travelled from Nandagaon to Mathurā in Akrūra's chariot. That evening, They wandered around the city of Mathurā and the bow sacrifice was performed. The next day, on Śiva-caturdaśī, the two brothers killed Kuvalayāpīḍa, Cāṇura, Muṣṭika and Kāmsa.

Every year in the month of Kārtika on Śuklā-daśamī, one day before Devotthāna-ekādaśī, the Caube community organises a festival to celebrate the killing of Kāmsa. During this festival a twenty-five to thirty foot tall statue of Kāmsa is built to be killed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha

Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha is adjacent to Śrī Raṅgeśvara Mahādeva and Kāmsa-ṭīlā, on the right side of the *parikramā* path and on the left side of the Mathurā-Āgrā road. It is currently a well-known place of *darśana*. *Ācārya keśarī om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja named this *maṭha* after the presiding deity of Mathurā, the Supreme Lord of lords, Śrī Keśavajī. From its inauguration, the author of this



*Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu & Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī (top)
at the Śrī Keśavaġī Gauḍīya Maṭha (below)*



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book was appointed superintendent in order to propagate pure *bhakti* as practised and preached by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to people in the Hindi speaking areas of India. In a very short time, many books were published from here in Hindi, India's national language, like *Jaiva-dharma*, *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*, *Śrīman Mahāprabhu ki Śikṣā*, *Upadeśāmṛta*, *Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā*, *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and the monthly magazine *Śrī Bhāgavata-patrikā*. New books about *bhakti* continue to be published to this day. Śrī Abhayacaraṇa Bhaktivedānta, who widely spread *śrī-harināma-saṅkīrtana* in the Western world as preached by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and who extensively published and distributed *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and many other devotional scriptures in many languages of the world, accepted the renounced order of life (*tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa*) at this place from *om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He accepted the *sannyāsa* name and title of *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. The author of this book was the priest at this ceremony.

*Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna
Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja (middle)
with his sannyāsa disciples:*

*Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Svāmī Mahārāja (right)*

*and Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Munī Mahārāja (left)*



After taking *darśana* of this *maṭha*, we proceed to Śiva-tāla and Kaṅkāli-devī.

Kaṅkāli-devī

The temple of Kaṅkāli-devī is found on Kaṅkāli-ṭilā. She is called Kaṁsa-kālī or Kaṅkāli-devī, because Kaṁsa worshipped her. This is the same eight-armed Durgā-devī who rides a lion, that Kaṁsa wanted to kill thinking her to be the daughter of Devakī. But the goddess escaped from his hands and ascended into the sky.



The temple of Kaṅkāli-devī



Balabhadra-kuṇḍa

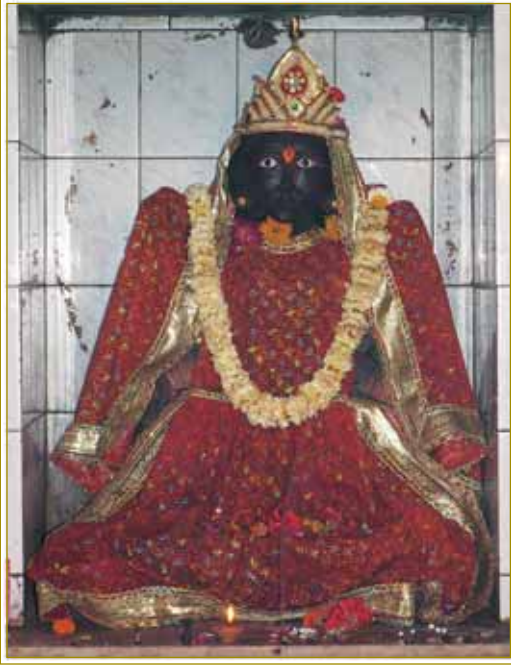
Proceeding on from here we come to Balabhadra-kuṇḍa. On the banks of this pond lie the temples of Dāūjī and Lord Jagannātha. We then arrive at the temple of Bhūteśvara Mahādeva.

Bhūteśvara Mahādeva

The eternal area-protector (*kṣetra-pāla*) on Mathurā's western side is Bhūteśvara Mahādeva. In the same temple compound is the cave of Pātāla-devī, whom Kaṁsa worshipped, and a little further on are Potrā-kuṇḍa, Ādikeśava and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janma-sthāna, which have already been described. We then reach Jñāna-vāpī, or Jñāna-bāvaḍī.



Bhūtesvara Mahādeva



Pātāla-devī

Jñāna-vāpī (Jñāna-bāvaḍi)

Jñāna-vāpī is an important ancient *tīrtha*, which is hidden within the earth on the ten-mile *parikramā* path around Mathurā, between Bhūteśvara Mahādeva and Kaṭarā Keśavadeva (the birthplace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa). Referring to this sacred place, the *Varāha Purāṇa* (*Mathurā-mahātmya*) states:

*yo vāpyām dharmarājasya, mathurāyāstu paścimai
sthānam karoti tasyām tu, grahadorṣarna lipyate*

“All the evil planetary influences of those persons who bathe in Īśavāpī-bāvaḍi of Dharmarāja, situated in western Mathurā, are removed and they attain *bhakti* to the Supreme Lord.”

In his *Mathurā Parikramā*, the best of poets, Harilāl Kakora, says:

*satyug kau ik tīrath kahau vāpī jñān-bhakti koñ lahoñ
yāmai joñ snān karaijū dhoī pāp bahu puny bharañjū*

“There is a holy place from Satya-yuga in the form of a well that is filled with knowledge (*jñāna*) and devotion (*bhakti*). Those who bathe in this well wash away all their sins and receive thousands and thousands of pious credits.”

According to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira built this *bāvaḍī* (deep tank with steps). This place is also important as the place where the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to consult with Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira.



Jñāna-vāpī

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta specifically describes the arrival in Śrī Dhāma Mathurā of Śacīnandana Śrī Gaurahari, who is non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa and who preached pure *bhakti* and the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's holy names throughout the entire world. Śrī Gaurahari took bath in the Yamunā at Viśrāma-ghāṭa and then went to the temple of Śrī Keśavadeva. Seeing Him performing *kīrtana* and dancing in ecstasy, a crowd of thousands assembled there. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu performed *ācamana* and bathed in Jñāna-bāvaḍī. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta mentions that He later stayed at the house of a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa* from the Sānoḍhiyā community who lived near Jñāna-bāvaḍī, and also accepted *prasāda* here.

Mahāvidyā-devī (Ambikā-devī)

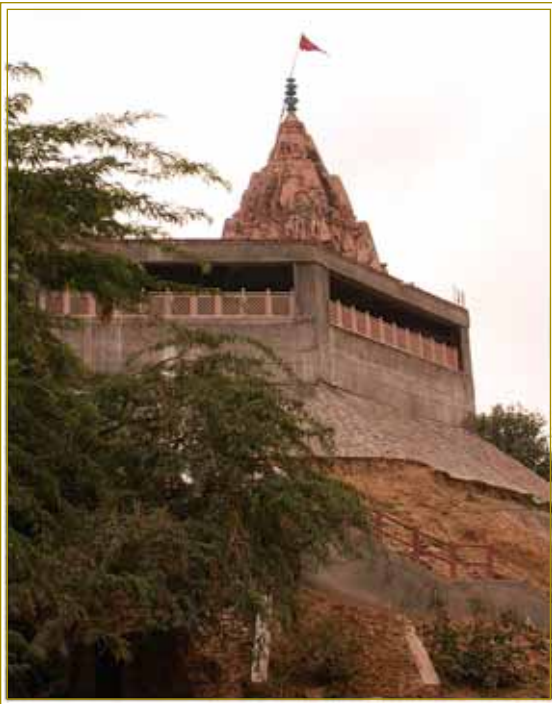
Once, Mahārāja Nanda, Yaśodā-devī, Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva and other *gopas* came to Ambikāvana on pilgrimage. They bathed in the sacred water of the Sarasvatī River, worshipped Paśupati (Gokaṛṇa Mahādeva) and stayed overnight. That night, a huge python caught Nanda Bābā and slowly began to swallow him. Everyone tried to save him, but to no avail. Nanda Bābā cried out to Kṛṣṇa in great distress, and something wonderful took place – Kṛṣṇa touched the python with His foot, and he at once gave up his huge snake body and assumed the form of a beautiful Vidyādhara⁴⁶. The Vidyādhara stood up and paid his respect to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. On Kṛṣṇa's inquiry, he revealed his identity. "I was a Vidyādhara named Sudarśana," he said. "Once, while flying in an airplane, I saw some deformed sages in the lineage of Aṅgīrā Muni and made fun of them. They cursed me to become a snake. Today that curse has proved to be a benediction, because the touch of Your lotus feet has not only freed me from the curse, but has also made my life successful." This place is famous as Mahāvidyā-devī.

Along the *parikramā* path after this holy place comes Sarasvatī-kunḍa, Cāmuṇḍā-devī and Rajaka-badha-tīlā.



Mahāvīdyā-dēvī (top)

*The temple of
Mahāvīdyā (left)*



Rajaka-badha-ṭilā (the place of killing of the washerman)

While roaming around Mathurā city, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva spotted a washerman (*rajaka*) whose job it was to wash and dye Kāṁsa's clothes. Seeing the fine garments in his care, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma asked him to give Them something suitable, but the washerman made fun of Them and refused to hand over any clothes. When Kṛṣṇa heard the washerman's sarcastic remarks, He beheaded him with a blow of His bare hand before everyone present. Thus Kṛṣṇa gave the washerman a liberation that was fitting for him.

Proceeding further, we reach Gokarṇa Mahādeva.

Gokarṇa Mahādeva

Gokarṇa Mahādeva is the area-protector of the *dhāma* on Mathurā's northern side. Śivajī here is called Gokarṇa Mahādeva because Gokarṇa, the famous speaker of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, worshipped him.



Gokarṇa Mahādeva

Continuing from here, near the Yamunā is Nilakanṭheśvara Mahādeva and further on is Ambarīṣa-tīlā.



Ambarīṣa-tīlā

Ambarīṣa-ṭilā

On the right hand side, near the confluence of the Sarasvatī and Yamunā, is Ambarīṣa-ṭilā. In Satya-yuga, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was the sole emperor of this world, which consists of seven islands. He was an unalloyed devotee of the Supreme Lord and engaged all his senses in following the various limbs of *bhakti*. With his mind, he would meditate upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. With his voice, he would chant the names of the Lord and glorify His various pastimes. With his hands, he would clean the temple of Bhagavān. He would engage his ears in hearing about the pastimes of the Lord. He would engage his eyes in taking *darśana* of Śrī Mukunda's temples. He would engage his nose in smelling the garlands, sandalwood paste and other articles that had been offered at the lotus feet of Bhagavān. He would honour the *prasāda* offered to the Supreme Lord by tasting it with his tongue, and with his legs he would circumambulate the Supreme Lord's *dhāma*, the *tulasī* plant, His temples and so on. He would also observe Ekādaśī and other fasts on days related to Hari.

Once, while residing at this place in Mathurā, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa observed the vow of Ekādaśī for one year by fasting without water (*nirjala*). On Dvādaśī, there was only a short time after sunrise in which it was auspicious to break his fast. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa worshipped Bhagavān and was just about to take grains that had been offered to the Supreme Lord, when Maharṣi Durvāsā arrived. With great respect, the king invited the sage to join him. The *maharṣi* said, "I accept your invitation, but I first need to finish my daily duties. I will go to the bank of the Yamunā; please wait until I return." Saying this, the sage went to the Yamunā. However, Maharṣi Durvāsā's return was slightly delayed, and the auspicious time was about to pass. After consulting with the *brāhmaṇas* and his ministers, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa took a drop of the water that washed the Supreme Lord's feet in order to protect his fast.

When Maharṣi Durvāsā returned, he was furious, knowing well that Mahārāja Ambarīṣa had broken the fast without him.

He pulled a matted lock of hair from his head and transformed it into a fiery demoness called Kṛtyā, who was ready to burn Ambarīṣa to ashes. However, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa simply stood there fearlessly with folded hands. The Sudarśana *cakra*, the protector of the devotees, immediately appeared and burnt Kṛtyā to ashes. Sudarśana *cakra* then leapt towards Maharṣi Durvāsā, who swiftly ran everywhere to save his life. He fled to Bhuḥ, Bhuvah, Svaḥ and other planetary systems. He even went to Brahmaloḥa and Śivaloḥa, but no one in those places could save him. Wherever he went, he saw the frightening Sudarśana *cakra* pursuing him. Finally, Maharṣi Durvāsā came to Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṅṭhaloḥa and desperately cried out: “Help, save me, protect me!” Bhagavān Śrī Nārāyaṇa said, “I am under the control of My devotees. I am their heart and they are My heart. How can I forsake those who have taken My shelter, having left everything – their home, wife, sons, family and wealth? You should at once return to Ambarīṣa and plead for forgiveness. Sudarśana *cakra* can be pacified by his prayer only, and not by any other means.”

For one full year, the great devotee Ambarīṣa Mahārāja remained standing there, waiting for Durvāsā and praying for the sage’s welfare. Upon returning from Vaikuṅṭha, the perturbed Durvāsā begged Mahārāja Ambarīṣa for his life. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja pacified Sudarśana *cakra* by offering prayers to him and then satisfied the sage by respectfully presenting him an array of delicious preparations. Durvāsā became astonished to witness the glories of Mahārāja Ambarīṣa and said, “Aah, today I have realised the unprecedented glories of Bhagavān Anantadeva’s devotees. I greatly offended Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, but still he always desires nothing but my welfare. This is only possible for the devotees of the Supreme Lord.”

This pastime took place here. To this day, Ambarīṣa-ṭilā stands as witness to the glories of the devotee Ambarīṣa. Nearby, towards the Yamunā, is Cakra-tīrtha, where Mahārāja Ambarīṣa pacified the *cakra* by offering various prayers.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Kaṁsa-kilā and other nearby places of darśana

After Sarasvatī-patana-tīrtha (Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā-ghāṭa) and Soma-tīrtha (Gaū-ghāṭa), one comes to Kaṁsa-kilā (the fort of Kaṁsa), Ghaṇṭākarnā and Mukti-tīrtha. Kaṁsa-kilā was the residence or palace of Kaṁsa. The ruins that lie here today bear testimony to this. Between Kaṁsa-kilā and Vasudeva-ghāṭa (near Svāmī-ghāṭa) are Brahma-ghāṭa, Vaikuṅṭha-ghāṭa and Dhārāpatana. Then, after Asi-kuṇḍa (Askunḍā-ghāṭa) and Maṇikarnikā-ghāṭa is Viśrāma-ghāṭa, which completes the ten-mile *parikramā* of Mathurā.

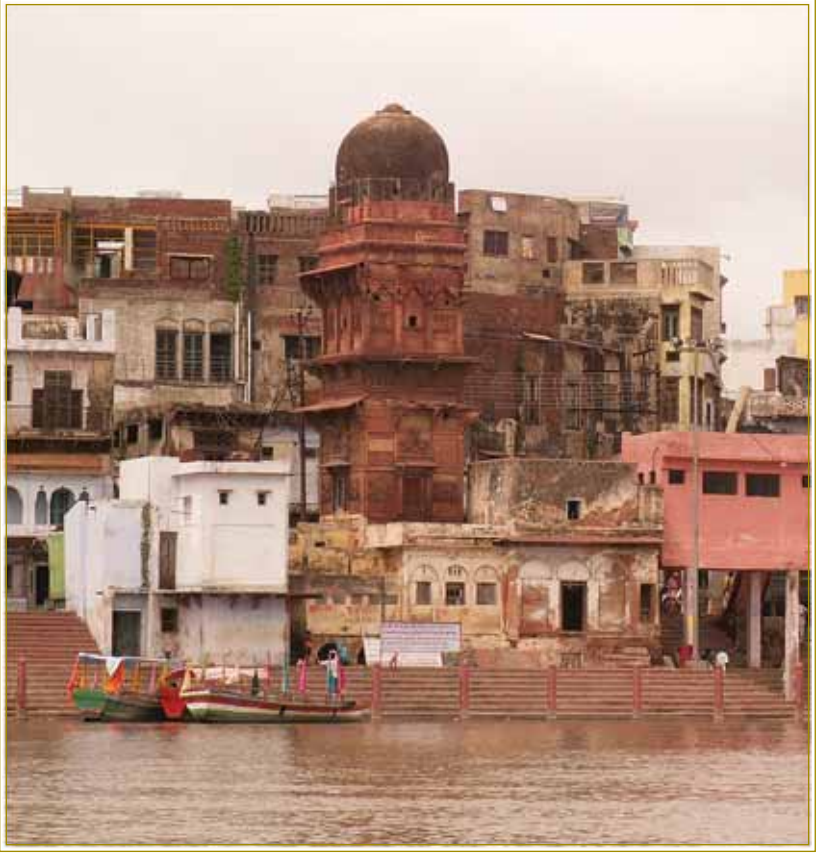




*From Kaiṅsa's fort (above)
one can have a good view of the Yamunā
and parts of Mathurā*



The fort of Kaiṅsa (left)



Satīburja

**Gatāśrama-Nārāyaṇa Temple
and other places of pilgrimage nearby**

On Mathurā's inner *parikramā* path, south of Viśrāma-ghāṭa, is the temple of Gatāśrama-Nārāyaṇa. Close to the present day Satīburja, in a lane to the right, stands the temple of Carcikā-devī. Near the temple of Raṅgeśvara Mahādeva, on the eastern side, lies Sapta-sāमुदri-kūpa, "the well of seven oceans". Then, under the railway line leading to the main railway station in Mathurā is Śiva-tāla. The road to Madhuvana also begins from here.



Dīrgha-Viṣṇu

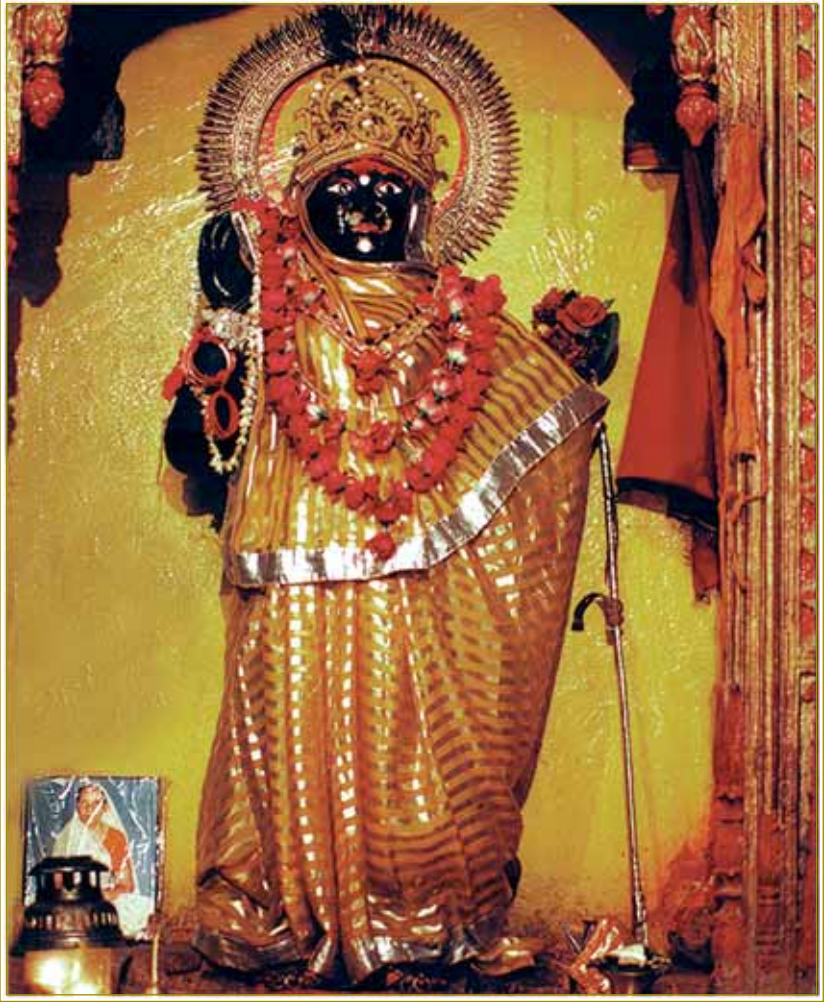
Dīrgha-Viṣṇu

The temple of Dīrgha-Viṣṇu lies close to Bharatapura Gate.

When Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva and Their cowherd friends were proceeding to Kāmsa's wrestling arena, Śrīdāma and other *sakhās* asked Kṛṣṇa, "Friend, are You going to the wrestling arena? Your body is small and tender. How will You kill the mighty Kāmsa?" Śrī Kṛṣṇa then displayed His huge (*dīrgha*) form, carrying a conch shell, disk, club and lotus flower. Thus, the *sakhās* were convinced that their Kanhaiyā could do anything by the mercy of Nārāyaṇa, and that Nārāyaṇa sometimes manifested through Him. Happily, they danced towards the wrestling arena with Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Mathurā-devī

Close to Dīrgha-Viṣṇu, towards the east and inside a lane, is the temple of Mathurā-devī, the presiding deity of Mathurā. As a *sakhī*, Mathurā-devī has a very loving relationship with Śrī Yamunā, and together they serve their Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



Mathurā-devī

Śrī Padmanābha

Heading east down the same lane, one comes to the temple of Bhagavān Śrī Padmanābha in Caubeyā-pāḍā. The grandfather of mankind, Brahmā, took birth on the lotus flower that manifests from the lotus stem growing out of Garbhodaśāyī Bhagavān Padmanābha's navel. Only by Śrī Padmanābha's mercy does *vairāja*⁴⁷ Brahmā create the material universe.



Śrī Padmanābha



Śveta-varāha

Two temples of Varāhadeva

Behind the present Dvārakādhīśa Temple in Māṇika-choka are two temples of Lord Varāha. One of them has a black deity of Varāha (Kṛṣṇa-varāha, or Ādi-varāha); the other has a white deity of Varāha (Śveta-varāha). During the period of Svāyambhuva Manu in Brāhmakalpa, Kṛṣṇa-varāha manifested from the nostril of Brahmā in a four-legged, boar form. He kept the Earth on His tusk and brought her up from Rasātala, the nether region. During the reign of Cākṣusa Manu, Śveta-varāha manifested from the ocean. His face was like that of a boar and the lower portion of His body was human-like. He is also called Nṛ-varāha (nṛ meaning “human”). He killed Hiraṇyākṣa and delivered the Earth.



Ādi-varāha

At the beginning of Satya-yuga, there was a *brāhmaṇa* sage named Kapila, who was a worshipper of Bhagavān Ādi-varāha. Indra, the king of the demigods, pleased that *brāhmaṇa* and then brought the deity of Varāha to the heavenly planets, where he installed Him for worship. Having defeated Indra, the mighty Rāvaṇa seized that Varāha deity from Svarga and established Him in Laṅkā. After killing the impersonalist Rāvaṇa, Śrī Rāmacandra brought that same deity to Ayodhyā and installed Varāhadeva in the palace. When Mahārāja Śatrughna was leaving Ayodhyā to kill Lavaṇāsura, he asked his elder brother Śrī Rāmacandra for the deity. Mahārāja Śatrughna carried the deity with him and, after killing Lavaṇāsura, established Him in the city of Mathurā, where one can take *darśana* of Him even today.

The temple of Dvārakādīśa

Among the new temples of Mathurā, the Dvārakādīśa Temple is prominent. It was established about 150 years ago by a devotee in the line of Śrī Vallabhācārya. This temple is close to Viśrāma-ghāṭa and Gatāśrama-ṭilā. The temples of Kṛṣṇa-varāha and Śveta-varāha are also nearby.

Dvārakādīśa is the king of Dvārakā, and thus Kṛṣṇa is here with His queens Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā, and without His peacock feather and flute. Generally, at the beginning of the rainy season, during the month of Śrāvaṇa, a very elaborate swing festival takes place here. Hundreds and thousands of devotees, both inhabitants of Mathurā and devotees from very far away, assemble here to attend the festival. The wealthy Dvārakādīśa swings on a golden swing bedecked with jewels.

Once, the author went with a thousand devotees to the Dvārakādīśa Temple. When he arrived, the temple door was closed. He sent a messenger to ask Dvārakādīśa, “Why are You hiding? Where is Your flute, peacock feather and dress of Vṛndāvana? Have You changed Your father and mother? Do You have any new, beautiful beloveds from Dvārakā or Mathurā? Why are You not coming forward?” Hearing this, Dvārakādīśa began to cry bitterly, remembering the pastimes of Vṛndāvana. The author and his party told Him that Śrīmatījī had sent them to see how He was. “She is lamenting for You,” they said. Dvārakādīśa then promised that He would return to Vṛndāvana in a day or two. The devotees then returned to their *maṭha*.



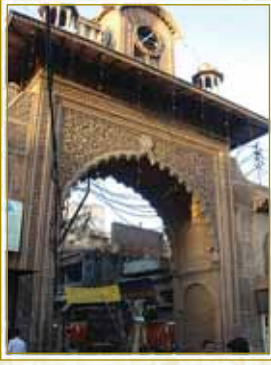
The Purāṇas and other sacred texts mention many more places of *darśana* other than the ones listed above; however, most of these places have now disappeared.



Endnotes

- 1 The Supreme Lord's disc weapon.
- 2 *bhūgola cakre saptapuryo
bhavanti tāsām madhye śākṣāt*
Śrī Gopāla-tāpani Upaniṣad
- 3 *idaṁ padmaṁ mahābhāge
sarveṣāṁ muktidāyakam
karṇikāyāṁ sthito devaḥ
keśavaḥ kleṣanāśanaḥ*
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 4 *na vidyate ca pātāle
nāntarikṣe na mānuṣe
samasta mathurāyāṁ
hi priyaṁ mama vasundhare*
- 5 *pṛthivyāṁ yāni tīrthāni
āsamudrasarāṁsi ca
mathurāyāṁ gamiṣyanti
mayi supte vasundhare*
- 6 *triṁśad varṣa sahasrāṇi
triṁśad varṣa śatāni ca
yatphalaṁ bhāratevarṣe
tatphalaṁ mathurā-smaran*
Skanda Purāṇa
- 7 *jaḥḥpavāsa nirato
mathurāyāṁ ṣaḍānana
janmaṣṭhānam samāsā
sarva pāpāih pramucyate*
Skanda Purāṇa
- 8 *na dṛṣṭvo mathurā yena
didṛkṣvā yasya jāyate
yatra tatra gatasyāsya
māthure janma jāyate*
Padma Purāṇa
- 9 *harau yeśāṁ sthīrā bhaktir
bhūyasi yeṣu tatkrpā
teṣāmevahi dhanyānām
mathurāyāṁ bhavedrati*
Padma Purāṇa
- 10 *catvāriṣanda yojanānām
tatastu mathurāsthītā
tatra devo hariḥ śākṣāt
svayaṁ tiṣṭhati sarvadā*
Vāyu Purāṇa
- 11 *aho madhupuri dhanyā
vaikuṇṭhācca garīyāsī
dinamekaṁ nivāsena
harau bhakti prajāyate*

ŚRĪ VĀJĀ-MĀṆḌALĀ PARĪKRĀMĀ

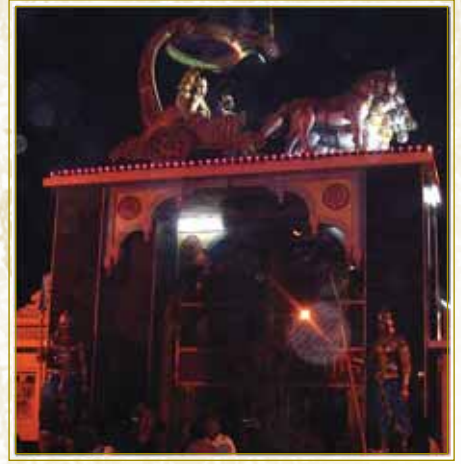


- trirātramāpi ye tatra
vasanti manuḡāmunne
harir dṛśyati sukhaṁ teṣāṁ
muktānāpi durlabham
- 12 adyāvanti patad grahaṁ
kuru kare māye śanairvijaya
chatra kāñci gṛhāṇa kāśi
purataḥ pādūyugaṁ dhāraya
nāyodhye bhaja sambhram
stutikathāṁ nodagāraya dvārake
devimṡya bhavatiṣu hanta
mathurā dṛṣṭiprasādāṁ dadhe
- 13 The son of Aniruddha, who is the
son of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's son Pradyumna.
- 14 Pratibhū means "to be equal to". A
pratibhū-vigraha is a deity that is
considered non-different from the
original deity it replaces.
- 15 avimukteḥ naraḥ snāto
muktīm prāpnotyasaṁśayam
tatrātha muñcate prāṇān
mam lokaṁ sa gacchati
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 16 catvāriśanda yojanānām
tatastu mathurāsthitā
tatra devo hariḥ sākṣāt
svayam tiṣṭhati sarvadā
Vāyu Purāṇa
- 17 A type of fire sacrifice which
lasts five days and requires a
minimum of sixteen priests,
performed by someone who
wants to go to heaven.
- 18 prayāga nāma tīrthaṁ
tu devānāmāpi durllabham
tasmin snāto naro devi!
agniṣṭoma-phalaṁ labhet
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 19 tathā kanakhalaṁ tīrthaṁ
guhya tīrthaṁ paraṁ mama
snāna-mātreṇa tatrāpi
nākapṛṣṭhe sa modate
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 20 asti kṣetraṁ paraṁ guhyam
tindukaṁ nāma kramataḥ
tasmin snāto naro devi!
mama loka mahiḡyate
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 21 The period during which the
sun or a planet enters into a new
zodiac sign.
- 22 An elaborate fire sacrifice that
establishes one as the emperor of
the world.
- 23 tataḥ paraṁ sūryatīrthaṁ
sarva-pāpa-vimocanam



- virocanaena balinā
sūryyastvārādhitau purā
āditye 'hani saṅkrāntau
grahaṇe candra-sūryyayoḥ
tasmin snāto naro devi!
rājasūyaphalaṁ labhet
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 24 tataḥ para vaṭasvāmī
tīrthānām tīrtham-uttamam
vaṭasvāmīti vikhyāto
yatra devo divākaraḥ
tattīrtha caiva yo bhaktyā
ravivāre niṣevate
prāpnotyārogyam-aiśvarya
mante ca gatim-uttamām
Saura Purāṇa
- 25 A ceremony in honour and for
the benefit of deceased relatives,
in which the forefathers are
offered piṇḍa, an oblation of rice
or flour.
- 26 A rice-ball or flour cake offered
to deceased ancestors; oblation at
the śrāddha ceremony.
- 27 yatra dhruvena santapṛm
ichhayā paramaṁ tapaḥ
tatraiva snāna-mātreṇa
dhruvaloke mahīyate

- dhruva-tīrthe ca vasudhe!
yaḥ śrāddhaṁ kurute naraḥ
pitr̥ṇa santārayet sarvān
pitr̥pakṣe viśeṣataḥ
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 28 dakṣiṇe dhruva-tīrthasya
ṛṣi-tīrthaṁ prakīrtitam
yatra snāto naro devi!
mama loka mahīyate
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 29 dakṣiṇe ṛṣi-tīrthasya
mokṣa-tīrthaṁ vasundhare
snāna-mātreṇa vasudhe!
mokṣaṁ prāpnoti mānavaḥ
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 30 tatraiva koṭi-tīrthaṁ tu
devānāmapi durllabham
tatra snānena dānena
mama loka mahīyate
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 31 tatraiva bodhi-tīrthantu
pitr̥ṇāmapi durllabham
piṇḍaṁ datvā tu vasudhe!
pitr̥lokaṁ sa gacchati
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 32 One believing that the Supreme
Lord has no potencies.



- 33 *uttare tvasikuṇḍāñca
tīrthantu navasañjñakam
navatīrthāt paraṁ tīrtha
na bhūtaṁ na bhaviṣyati
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*
- 34 *tataḥ sañyamanaṁ nāma
tīrthaṁ trailokya-viśrutam
tatra snāto naro devi!
mama lokaṁ sa gacchati
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*
- 35 *dhārāsampātane snātvā
nākapṛṣṭhe sa modate
athātra muñcate prāññ
mama lokaṁ sa gacchati
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*
- 36 *ataḥ paraṁ nāgatīrthaṁ
tīrthānām uttamottamam
yatra snātvā divaṁ yānti
ye mṛtāste 'punarbhavāḥ
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*
- 37 *ghaṇṭābharaṇakam tīrthaṁ
sarva-pāpa-pramocanam
yasmin snāto naro devi!
sūryyaloke mahīyate
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*
- 38 *tīrthānām-uttamaṁ tīrthaṁ
brahmaloke'tiviśrutam
tatra snātvā ca pītṅvā ca
niyato niyatāsanah
brahmaṇā samanujñāto
viṣṇulokaṁ sa gacchati
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*
- 39 *somatīrthaṁ tu vasudhe!
pavitre yamunāmbhasi
tatrābhiṣekaṁ kurvīta
sarva-karma-pratiṣṭhitaḥ
modate somaloke tu
idameva na saṁśayaḥ
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*
- 40 *sarasvatyāñca patanaṁ
sarva-pāpa-haraṁ śubham
tatra snātvā naro devi!
avarṇo'pi yatir bhavet
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*
- 41 *cakra-tīrthaṁ tu vikhyātam
māthure mama maṇḍale
yastatra kurute snānaṁ
trivātrapoṣito narah
snāna-mātreṇa manujo
mucyate brahma-hatyayā
(Ādi-varāha Purāṇa)*



42 *daśāsvedham ṛṣibhiḥ
pūjitam sarvadā purā
tatra ye snānti manujās
teṣāṃ svargo na durllabhaḥ*
(Ādi-varāha Purāna)

43 *tīrtham tu vighnarājasya
punyam pāpa-haram śubham
tatra snātam tu manujam
vighnarājo na pīdayet*
(Ādi-varāha Purāna)

44 *tataḥ param koṭi-tīrthāṃ
tīrthānām paramam śubham
tatraiva snāna-mātreṇa
gavām koṭi-phalam labhet*
(Ādi-varāha Purāna)

45 *tato gokarṇa tīrthākhyam
tīrtham bhuvanaviśrutam
vidyate viśvanāthasya
viṣṇoratyanta-vallabham*
(Ādi-varāha Purāna)

46 A celestial being.

47 Vairāja means that this particular Brahmā is of jīva-tattva.





Madhuvāṇa







adhuvana lies south-west of Śrī Mathurā, about two-and-a-half miles from Bhūteśvara Mahādeva. It is one of Vraja's twelve famous forests. In Satya-yuga, Bhagavān killed a demon named Madhu here, for which He became known as Madhusūdana. Likewise, this forest became known as Madhuvana, because it is as endearing and sweet as the Supreme Lord Śrī Madhusūdana Himself.¹

Another name of Madhusūdana is Mādhava, because He is the beloved (*dhava*) of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who is the foremost among all Lakṣmīs. This Śrī Mādhava is the presiding deity of this forest. While taking bath here or performing *ācamana* one should chant the following *mantra* – *om hrīm hrīm madhuvana-adhipataye mādhavāya namaḥ svāhā*. Chanting this *mantra* renders one's *parikramā* of this forest successful. The present name of Madhuvana is Maholī-grāma. On the eastern side of the village of Maholī is Dhruva-ṭilā, where the deities of the child

Dhruva and his worshipful four-armed Śrī Nārāyaṇa splendidly reside. Dhruva performed severe austerities here to attract the Supreme Lord, using the *mantra* Devarṣi Nārada had given him. Being pleased with his worship, the Lord appeared before Dhruva and awarded him absolute monarchy over the entire Earth for 36,000 years, followed by rulership of Dhruvaloka, an imperishable abode of Śrī Hari within this material universe.

In Tretā-yuga, the sages and other residents of Madhuvana were terrified by the atrocities committed by the Madhu demon, who, after performing severe austerities, had obtained a trident from Śaṅkarajī. As long as that trident remained in Madhu's hands, no demigod, demon or human being could defeat him. Although Madhu was a prince in the dynasty of the Sungod (*sūrya-vamśa*), he became cruel and devoid of good conduct due to bad association. His father rejected him and banished him from the kingdom. Madhu lived in Madhuvana, where he established a new kingdom in which he harassed the citizens. Māndhātā, the highly illustrious king of the sun dynasty, wanted to punish Madhu and therefore he attacked him, but he was slain by Madhu's trident.

Before his death, Madhudaitya gave that trident to his son, Lavaṅāsura. He told him that as long as this infallible trident remained in his hands no one would be able to kill him; rather, it would kill all his enemies.

Trident in hand, Lavaṅāsura's tyranny was even more cruel than his father's. The great sages of Madhuvana and surrounding areas, distressed by his atrocities, went to Śrī Rāma in Ayodhyā and humbly prayed for protection. They informed Śrī Rāma of Lavaṅāsura's might and of his infallible trident that rendered him invincible. They explained that killing him would not be possible as long as he had his trident at hand.

In Ayodhyā, the Supreme Lord Śrī Rāmacandra coronated His younger brother Śatrughna as the king of Madhuvana. Śatrughna asked Lord Rāmacandra for the powerful deity of Śrī Varāha, that Rāmacandra had brought from Laṅkā, and his elder brother



*Dhruva (left) and his worshipful
Śrī Nārāyaṇa*

ŚRĪ VĀJĀ-MANḌALĀ PARIKRAMĀ

happily agreed. Śatrughna then went with the sages to the āśrama of Vālmiki Ṛṣi and, after receiving his blessings, proceeded to Madhuvana. Bow and arrows in hand, Śatrughna arrived at the entrance of Lavaṇāsura's cave at a time when Lavaṇāsura had gone hunting in the woods, and had left his trident behind in the cave. When the demon returned, carrying dead elephants, deer and other animals, Śatrughna challenged him to battle and a fierce fight ensued. In desperation, Lavaṇāsura tried to get hold of his trident, but Śrī Śatrughna, the highly valorous warrior and subduer of his enemies, was able to obstruct him, and with his sharp arrows he succeeded in cutting off his head. Śatrughna then re-established the deserted Madhupurī and installed Lord Varāhadeva there. This Ādi-varāhadeva is still present at the very same location in present day Mathurā, which lies within Madhuvana.



The deity of Śrī Śatrughna

Lord Mādhava's dear Madhu-kuṇḍa also lies in Madhuvana, and is now also called Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa. Nearby is the cave of Lavaṅāsura. A deity of Śrī Śatrughna resides in a temple near Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa.

Towards the end of Dvāpara-yuga, Śrī Kṛṣṇa would take hundreds of thousands of cows out to graze, walking behind them and calling out their names: "Dhaulī! Dhūmrī! Kālindī! ..." He would make sounds to instruct them, such as "Hiyo-hiyo! – Come, come!"; "Dhīrī-dhīrī! – Slowly, slowly!" and "Tīrī-tīrī! – Come to the river-bank to drink!" As He walked with Dāu Bhaiyā (Baladeva), Kṛṣṇa played His sweet flute, and laughed and joked, placing His hands on the shoulders of the *sakhās*. As the boys herded the cows, delightful uproars would break out amongst them. In this way, all of Madhuvana was showered with the sweet nectar (*madhu*) of *prema*, which Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma relished while grazing the cows. While walking along like this, sometimes Kṛṣṇa's thirsty eyes would look with sidelong glances at the *gopīs* who were hiding within the *kuñjas* or on the balconies or windows of their palaces. The beautiful young ladies of Vraja worshipped Kṛṣṇa with their loving sidelong glances as He returned from the forest. Kṛṣṇa would show that He accepted their worship by the movement of His eyes. To the young ladies of Vraja, even a second in separation from Kṛṣṇa would feel like millions of millenniums, and a millennium in His company would seem like a fraction of a second.

Kṛṣṇa's cow herding pastimes in Madhuvana are as sweet as honey (*madhu*) and beyond description. In Kali-yuga, about five hundred fifty years ago, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited Vraja and came to Madhuvana, where a momentary vision (*sphūrti*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes overwhelmed Him with ecstasy. Each year, many groups of pilgrims stop here to rest.

In Madhuvana, Dāūjī and the *sakhās* would dance as they relished the sweet nectar of this forest. This is well known. Today, one can also take *darśana* of the black deity of Dāūjī here. There is a deep secret behind the black colour of this deity. After leaving Vṛndāvana and Mathurā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva resided in Dvārakā



Madhu-kunḍa

with Their relatives. When Baladeva heard about the restlessness and lamentation of all of Vrja in separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He wanted to take Kṛṣṇa back there, yet because this was somehow delayed, Baladeva went there alone. He did His best to console everyone, but when He saw the extent of their state of separation from Kṛṣṇa, He also felt intense separation from Him. Meditating upon Śyāma and His pastimes in Vrja, Baladeva began to relish śyāma-rasa (or mādhubura-rasa), and Himself took on a śyāma

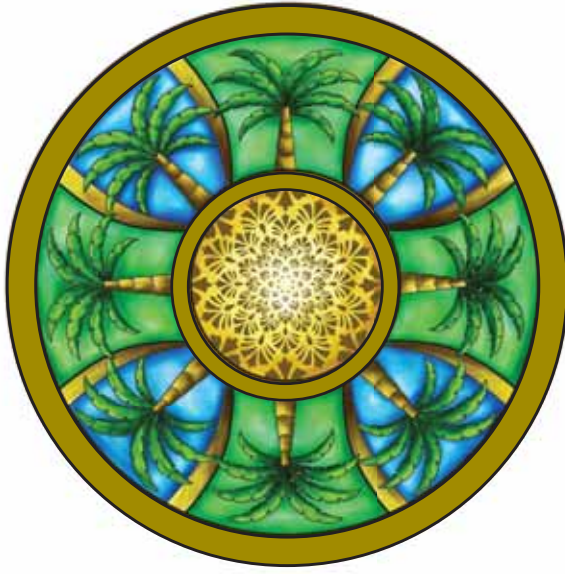


(blackish-blue) complexion. This *śyāma-rasa* is the only honey that is truly sweet and it is eternally relished by Baladeva, who thus remains perpetually immersed in the ecstasy of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

Endnotes

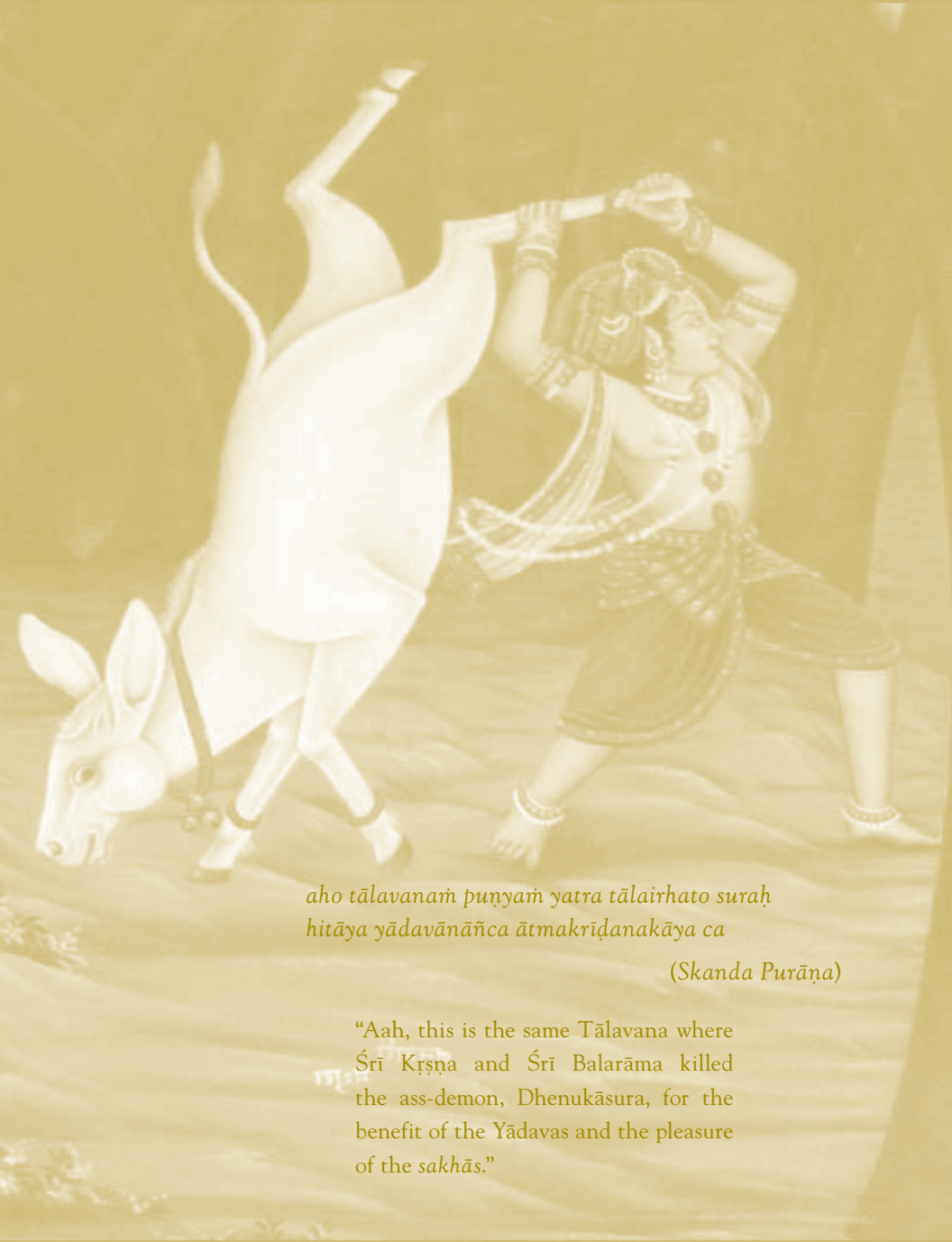
- madhorvanam prathamato
yatra vai mathurāpurī
madhudaityo hato yatra
hariṇā viśvamūrtinā*

Ādi-varāha Purāṇa



Ṭālavāṇa





*aho tālavanaṁ puṇyaṁ yatra tālairhato suraḥ
hitāya yādavānāñca ātmakriḍanakāya ca*

(Skanda Purāṇa)

“Aah, this is the same Tālavana where Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma killed the ass-demon, Dhenukāsura, for the benefit of the Yādavas and the pleasure of the *sakhās*.”



his forest is situated about six miles south of Mathurā and two-and-a-half miles south-west of Madhuvana. It was once an enchanting forest full of palm (*tāla*) trees. Cruel Kāmsa had appointed one of his followers, Dhenukāsura, to guard this forest, a duty he carefully performed along with his many wives and sons. Only Mahārāja Kāmsa and his followers enjoyed the forest's sweet *tāla* fruits, which were otherwise inaccessible to ordinary people.

One day, while herding the cows, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva together with the cowherd boys wandered near Tālavana. The boys were so ravenous that they implored Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva to protect them from the demon of hunger and said that they could smell sweet, ripe *tāla* fruits coming from nearby. Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva led them into Tālavana.¹

In the forest, Baladeva shook one of the palm trees. The fruit thudded to the ground and the cowherd boys jumped for

joy. Hearing the sound of the falling fruits, Dhenukāsura and his followers attacked Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva with great force, kicking Them with their hind legs. Without strain or effort, Baladeva Prabhu caught the hind legs of the valorous Dhenukāsura, whirled him around in the sky and threw him on to the top of a huge palm tree. The demon passed stool and urine and then died. Kṛṣṇa started killing Dhenukāsura's donkey followers, and soon their urine, stool and blood contaminated the entire forest. All the palm trees fell on each other and were destroyed. Later, when Tālavana was again clean, the *sakhās* and everyone else could easily go there.

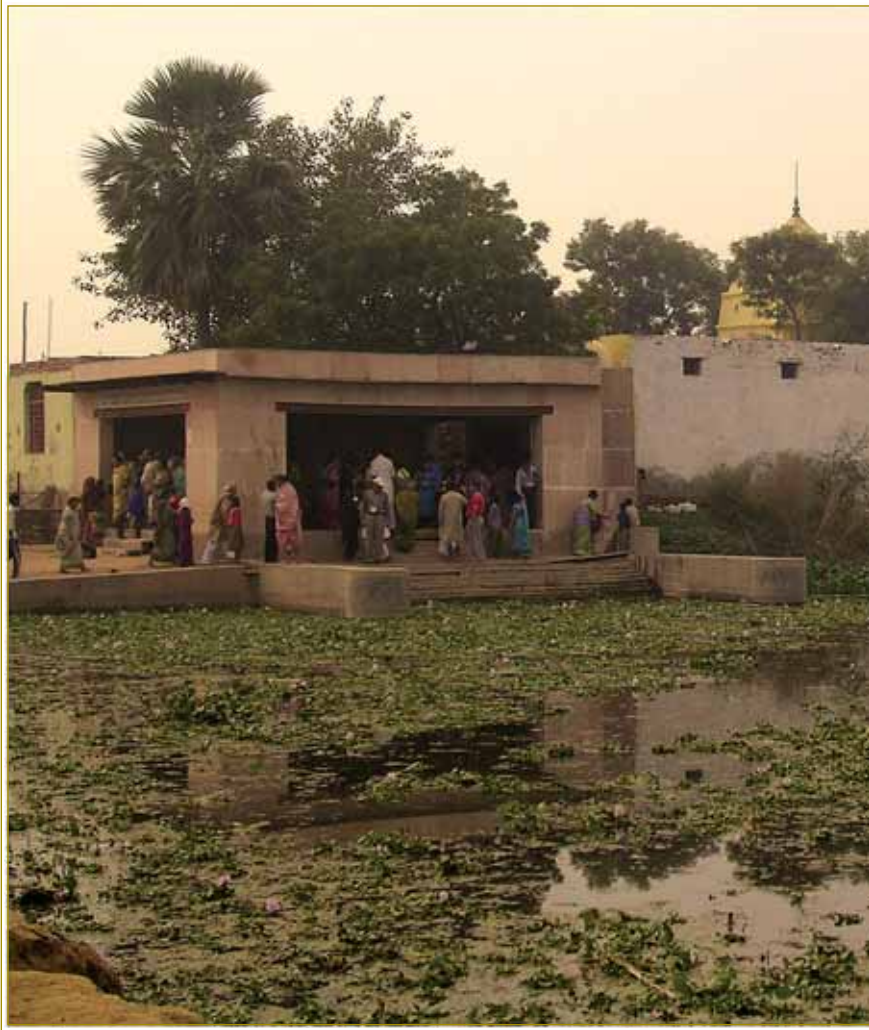
This pastime carries some deep and important teachings. Śrī Baladeva Prabhu is *akhaṇḍa guru-tattva*, the complete and undivided principle of *guru*. In other words, He is that personality from whom all bona fide spiritual masters manifest. It is only by the mercy of the spiritual master that a *sādhaka* can protect his heart from ignorance. A genuine *guru* alone can remove all types of ignorance from the heart of a sincere disciple and infuse it with devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti*). Dhenukāsura is the personification of ignorance. Realisation of the truth about Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-tattva*), the science of devotional service to Him (*bhakti-tattva*) and the nature of the illusory energy (*māyā-tattva*) is only possible by the mercy of Śrī Baladeva Prabhu. Only then will *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa become strong and fixed.

Due to foolishness, donkeys carry all kinds of loads in this material world. They are very lusty, and tolerate the kicks of she-donkeys and the beatings of washermen. Those who, out of gross foolishness, neglect to worship the Supreme Lord, carry all the bad qualities of a donkey. During the rainy season, when there is plenty of grass, the foolish donkey assumes he has not eaten anything and thus becomes lean and thin. And during the summer, when there is a scarcity of grass, the donkey assumes he has eaten it all and thus becomes fat.

Here, at Tālavana, lies Balabhadra-kuṇḍa and a temple of Baladeva.



The deity of Baladeva



*Balabhadra-kunḍa
and the temple of Baladeva*



Endnote

- ¹ This is described as follows in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.15.27):

*evam suhṛd-vacaḥ śrutvā
suhṛt-priya-cikīrṣayā
prahasya jagmatur gopair
vṛtau tālavanaṁ prabhū*

“Upon hearing the words of Their friends, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma laughed and, desiring to give them pleasure, entered Tālavana in their company.”



Kumudavāṇa







Two miles west of Tālavana is Kumudavana, which presently goes by the name Kudaravana. The *kuṇḍa* here is called both Kumudini-kuṇḍa and Vihāra-kuṇḍa. While herding the cows, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Balarāma and the cowherd boys wandered throughout this delightful place. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself sported in this *kuṇḍa* with the cowherd boys and with sweet words He would summon the cows to the bank of the pond by exclaiming, “*Tīrī-tīrī!*” And then with “*Cūṅ-cūṅ!*” He would tell them to drink water. The boys decorated each other with garlands made of *kumudini* flowers. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa hid from His *sakhās* and, unseen by them, He sported in the water here with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Lalitā, Viśākhā and other *priya-narma-sakhīs*. There is currently a deity of Śrī Kapiladeva on the bank of this *kuṇḍa*. Lord Kapila worshipped Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa at this place.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

From here, the pilgrimage of Vraja proceeds to Bahulāvana via Śāntanu-kuṇḍa. In the neighbourhood are picturesque pastime places, such as Ompār, Mānako-nagara, Lagāyo, Ambikāvana, Gaṇeśarā (Gandheśvarivana), Datihā (Datīya), Chaṭṭikarā and Garuḍa-Govinda.

Datihā (Datīya)

Datihā lies about six miles west of Mathurā and two miles from Śāntanu-kuṇḍa. According to the *Padma Purāṇa*, Nanda Mahārāja and all the Vrajavāsīs, including Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beloved *gopīs*, went to Kurukṣetra at the time of a solar eclipse to meet Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa repeatedly assured them, saying, "I shall soon return to Vraja," and then sent them back to Vraja. Although the *gopas* and *gopīs* did return to Vraja with Nanda Bābā, instead of going back to Gokula-Mahāvana, they waited for Kṛṣṇa near Datihā on the other side of the Yamunā (from Gokula). The village in which they stayed while waiting for Kṛṣṇa is called Magerā or Magherā. After Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed Śiśupāla He went to the vicinity of Mathurā, where Dantavakra had gone to fight with Him. Kṛṣṇa killed Dantavakra at Datihā, and then met with His parents and the other Vrajavāsīs. Because Dantavakra was killed here, this place is called Datihā [a name derived from the Sanskrit *dantavakra-ha*, "killer of Dantavakra"].

Śakaṭikarā

The current name of Śakaṭikarā is Chaṭṭikarā. It is on the Delhi–Mathurā highway, about four miles from Mathurā and two miles from Vṛndāvana. Concerned by the violence of the demons in Gokula-Mahāvana, Nanda Bābā came to Śakaṭikarā with all the Vrajavāsīs. They established a place to live here by arranging their hundreds of thousands of bullock-carts in the shape of a crescent moon. This place became known as Śakaṭikarā because the Vrajavāsīs used bullock-carts (*śakaṭa*) to set up their residence. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma would go from here to sweet Vṛndāvana

and other nearby places to graze the calves and cows. Kṛṣṇa performed *rāsa-līlā* and other Vraja pastimes while living here. At that time, Vṛndāvana, the place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's playful pastimes, was not a prosperous city but a rural area ornamented with many varieties of groves, creepers and attractive forests.

Garuḍa-Govinda

Kṛṣṇa performed various pastimes at this place, which lies near Śakaṭīkarā. One day while grazing the cows, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was absorbed in playing here with the *sakhās*. In their play, Kṛṣṇa made Śrīdāma Sakhā assume the role of Garuḍa and then He climbed on his back, acting as if the husband of Lakṣmī, Nārāyaṇa Himself, had mounted Garuḍa's back. Even today, one can take *darśana* of Govindajī with Śrīdāma in the role of Garuḍa.



Garuḍa-Govinda

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

This location is also connected with Lord Rāma's pastimes. When the serpents released by Meghanātha bound Śrī Rāmacandra in their coils, He became helpless. Hearing of this from Devaṛṣi Nārada, Garuḍa came to the rescue. As soon as the serpents saw Garuḍa, they released Śrī Rāmacandra and fled. This incident left Garuḍa doubtful as to whether Śrī Rāma was in fact Bhagavān, the Supreme Lord, but by associating with Mahātmā Kakabhuṣuṇḍī and by receiving *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa at the time of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, this delusion was removed. At that time, Śrī Kṛṣṇa climbed upon his back and assured him that He was indeed the Supreme Lord. Garuḍa-Govinda is the place where Garuḍa had *darśana* of Śrī Govinda, the maintainer of the cows and cowherd boys.

Gandheśvarī

The present name of this village is Gaṇeśarā-gaon. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys would smear aromatic (*gandha*) substances on their bodies while grazing the cows. It is said that Śrī Kṛṣṇa became intoxicated by the fragrance emanating from the body of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who was hiding nearby with Her girlfriends.¹ Seeing Śrīmatījī, the flute slipped from His hands, His peacock-feather crown fell at Her lotus feet, and He fainted.² This place is therefore called Gandheśvarī-tīrtha.

Śrīmatī Rādhikā is also called Gāndharvā. To this day, Gāndharvā-kuṇḍa (so named after Śrīmatī Rādhikā) continues to celebrate the triumphant, amorous pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. In modern times, the name Gandheśvarī has changed to Gaṇeśarā.

Khecarī-gaon

Khecarī-gaon is two miles west of Mathurā, and one mile north-east of Śāntanu-kuṇḍa. *Khecarī* refers to the *rākṣasī* Pūtanā, a demoness who roamed the sky. Kaṁsa knew about her power and adopted her as his sister. On his request, the impure Pūtanā, who could transform herself into many forms and who used to drink the blood and eat the flesh of small children, came in the guise

of a beautiful mother to the house of Nanda Mahārāja to kill Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Although her breasts were smeared with a deadly poison, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the ocean of causeless mercy, sucked out her life along with the poison, and bestowed upon her a position equal to a nursemaid in the transcendental world. Khecarī-gaon is the place of residence of the *rākṣasī* Pūtanā.

Śāntanu-kuṇḍa

Śāntanu-kuṇḍa is the place where Mahārāja Śāntanu performed austerities. Its present name is Satohā, and it is on the Govardhana road about three miles from Mathurā. Mahārāja Śāntanu worshipped Bhagavān here with the desire to beget a son. This



The temple of Śrī Śāntanu-Bihārījī



Śrī Śāntanu-Bihārījī

son became famous as Grandsire Bhīṣma. Bhīṣma's mother was Gaṅgā, however, for a particular reason she left Śāntanu Mahārāja. The king then became attracted to Satyavatī, who was called Matsyagandhā or Matsyodarī, and who possessed great beauty. She was living in the house of a fisherman across the Yamunā opposite Mathurā. Mahārāja Śāntanu desired to marry her, but the fisherman, Dāśarāja, was unwilling to give the king his adopted daughter in marriage. He said, "If you accept the condition that the son born from my daughter will be the successor to your kingdom, then you can marry her." Mahārāja Śāntanu refused this proposal for the sake of the crown prince Devavrata (Bhīṣma), yet his heart

felt great sadness. When Prince Devavrata came to know of this, he went to the house of the fisherman and vowed to remain a life-long *brahmacārī*. He promised that the child born from Matsyodarī would ascend the throne. Thus, he was able to arrange for the fisherman’s daughter to marry his father Mahārāja Śāntanu. It is believed that while Hastināpura was Mahārāja Śāntanu’s capital, he also had a place of residence here at Śāntanu-kuṇḍa.

Women who desire a child bathe in this *kuṇḍa*. Behind the temple there, they make a *svastika* out of cow dung and perform *pūjā*. In the middle of Śāntanu-kuṇḍa, on a raised hill, is the temple of Śāntanu’s worshipful deity, Śrī Śāntanu-Bihārījī.

Endnotes

- ¹ Śrī Rādhā-rasa-sudhā-nidhi (verse 2) describes this as follows:

*yasyā kadāpi vasanāñcalakhekanottha
dhanyātidhanya-pavanena kṛtārthamānī
yogīndra-durgamagatirmadhusūdano 'pi
tasyā namo 'stu vṛṣabhānubhūdo diṣe 'pi*

“Madhusūdana (Kṛṣṇa) is difficult to attain even by the best of *yogīs*. However, even He feels Himself greatly blessed when He is touched by even the slightest playful breeze coming from the tip of Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s garment. I offer my obeisances to any direction in which I may find this daughter of Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu.”

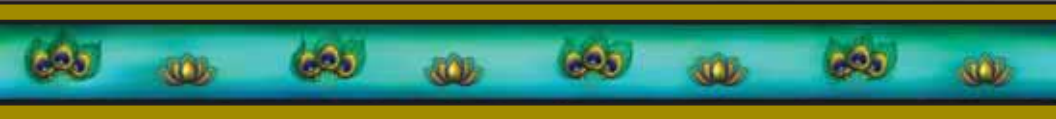
- ² Śrī Rādhā-rasa-sudhā-nidhi (verse 39) also states:

*vamśi karānnipatitaḥ skhalitaṁ śikhaṇḍam
bhraṣṭaṅca pītavasaṇaṁ vrajarājasūnoḥ
yasyāḥ kaṭakṣaśaraghāta-vimūrcchitasya
tām rādhikāṁ paricarāmi kadā rasena*

“When can I worship with *rasa* that Rādhikā whose arrow-like glances cause the prince of Vraja to faint, His yellow cloth to fall off, His crown to loosen, and His flute to fall from His hand?”



Bahulāvāṇa







he charming forest of Bahulāvana is full of beauty. According to the *Skanda Purāṇa* (*Mathurā-khaṇḍa*), Śrī Hari's *sakhī* Bahulā resides here – *bahulā śrīhareḥ patnī tatra tiṣṭhati sarvadā*. This place is now called Bāṭī. It lies seven miles west of Mathurā, between Rādhā-kunḍa and Vṛndāvana. Saṅkarṣaṇa-kunḍa and Māna-sarovara are two *kunḍas* in Bahulāvana.

Once, when Śrīmatī Rādhikā was in Her sulky mood (*māna*), She hid Herself in a *kuñja* here. In separation from Her, Kṛṣṇa became completely distressed. With the help of the *sakhīs* He was able to find Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and with great difficulty He pacified Her *māna*.

It is popularly believed that any desire of a person who takes bath here will be fulfilled. In the temple on the bank of Saṅkarṣaṇa-kunḍa are deities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a tiger, a cow, its calf and a *brāhmaṇa*. According to local lore, a cow named Bahulā was once drinking water from this pond when a fierce tiger



attacked and caught her. She assured the tiger that she would return to be eaten after she had first gone to the house of her master, a *brāhmaṇa*, and fed milk to her hungry calf. When she got home, she told her calf to drink milk to his full satisfaction, and told him about her promise to the tiger. However, the calf insisted on going with her without drinking any milk. The *brāhmaṇa* also prepared himself to go alone. He planned to leave the cow and calf at home and give himself to the tiger as food. In the end, all three approached the tiger, each willing to sacrifice himself. At that moment, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself appeared there, and the tiger underwent a change



Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa

of heart. By the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *brāhmaṇa* returned home safely with his cow and calf.

Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa lies within Bahulāvāṇa. On Bahulāṣṭamī it is customary to take bath in Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Large numbers of people assemble to bathe here on that day.

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wandered through the different forests, He became overwhelmed by the natural beauty of this place. A charming and heart-rending description of this is given in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā, Chapter 17)* as follows: When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu entered Bahulāvāṇa,

the beautiful cows grazing there surrounded Him. They stopped eating the grass and, overflowing with *prema*, began to bellow and lick His body. Seeing the affectionate motherly mood of the cows, Mahāprabhu became completely absorbed in ecstatic waves of *prema*. When He regained some external consciousness, He began caressing the cows and they did not want to leave Him. It was with great difficulty that the cowherd folk forced them onwards.

Again Śrī Mahāprabhu became absorbed in transcendental emotions. Weeping He called out, “*Kothāya kṛṣṇa, kothāya kṛṣṇa?* – Where is Kṛṣṇa? Where is Kṛṣṇa?” Herds of deer and does gathered and fearlessly licked Mahāprabhu’s limbs with affection. Parrots, cuckoos and bees began singing in the fifth note, and peacocks danced before Him. Completely jubilant, the trees and creepers covered themselves in buds, new leaves and flowers. With their arm-like branches and twigs, they lovingly offered their flowers and fruits at the lotus feet of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

Seeing the ecstatic emotions of the moving and non-moving entities of Vṛndāvana, Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s absorption in transcendental ecstasy intensified. He loudly cried, “Chant ‘Kṛṣṇa’, chant ‘Kṛṣṇa!’” and all of those moving and non-moving entities echoed His words. Sometimes Mahāprabhu, crying piteously, clasped hold of the necks of the deer and does who gazed at His lotus face with love-filled glances and tear-filled eyes.

A little further on, Śrīman Mahāprabhu saw a female and male parrot (*sārī* and *śuka*) sitting opposite each other on two branches of a tree, lovingly quarrelling about the glories of the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Śuka: My Kṛṣṇa is Madana-mohana, the enchanter of Cupid’s mind.

Sārī: Yes, He is – as long as my Rādhā is at His left side. Otherwise, He is only Madana (Cupid).

Śuka: My Kṛṣṇa lifted Girirāja on His finger.

Sārī: Because my Rādhā transmitted power into Him; otherwise, how could He have done so?



Śuka: My Kṛṣṇa is the life of the whole universe.

Sārī: My Rādhā is the life of that life.

Śuka: My Kṛṣṇa's head is beautifully decorated with a peacock-feather.

Sārī: Only because my Rādhā's name is marked on that feather.

Śuka: The peacock-feather on my Kṛṣṇa's head leans to the left.

Sārī: Because it wants to bow down to my Rādhā's feet.

Śuka: My Kṛṣṇa is the moon.

Sārī: My Rādhā is the trap that captures that moon.

Śuka: There is no need to quarrel uselessly. Let us glorify the Youthful Couple together.

Sārī: I happily agree to this.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

This loving quarrel between the *śuka* and *sārī* is also described in *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. Here, the male parrot says (13.29):

“May our Lord Jagamohana, whose unparalleled beauty plunders the wealth of patience of an innumerable multitude of women, whose world-famous glory astounds even Lakṣmī-devī, whose strength turns the majestic Govardhana mountain into a child’s toy, who has unlimited qualities, whose simple disposition entertains everyone, and whose glory substantiates the welfare of the entire universe, protect the entire world.”¹

Hearing this, the female parrot replies (*Govinda-līlāmṛta* 13.30):

“*Śuka*, Śrī Rādhikā’s divine love, beauty, dancing, excellent calmness, expertise in music, wealth of good qualities, and poetic compositions, or in other words, Her erudition, are all so attractive that She steals away the heart of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enchants the mind of the entire universe.”²

The male parrot then says (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 17.214):

“Dear *sārī*, all glories to Śrī Madana-mohana, the enchanter of Cupid, who carries a flute. He steals the heart of all the women in the entire universe, and enjoys with the *goṣīs*.”³

After hearing the parrots’ loving quarrel, Śrīman Mahāprabhu watched the dance of the peacocks. Seeing their bluish necks He remembered Kṛṣṇa and became so overwhelmed in ecstatic love that He fell down on the earth in a faint. His companions somehow brought Him back to consciousness, and He continued His *parikramā* of Vraja.

Śaknā-gaon

This village is situated one mile from the village of Bāṭī. Here, one can take *darśana* of Balabhadra-kuṇḍa and Dāūjī Temple.

Toṣa-gaon

The *gopa* Toṣa, an expert dancer, lived in this village. He taught Śrī Kṛṣṇa how to dance expertly too, by which Kṛṣṇa became extremely satisfied (*santoṣa*). Tarasa-kuṇḍa lies here. Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, the cows and cowherd boys would feel most satisfied when they drank the water of this *kuṇḍa*. This village is therefore called Toṣa-gaon.

Jakhina-grāma

This village lies two miles from Toṣa-gaon. Its previous name was Dakṣiṇa-grāma. While Śrīmatī Rādhikā's leftist mood, *vāmya-bhāva*, is renowned and is most pleasing to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, each and every transcendental sentiment of every heroine exists in Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Therefore, under certain special circumstances, Kiśorījī pleases Śrī Kṛṣṇa by manifesting the *bhāvas* of a right-wing heroine (*dakṣiṇa nāyikā*). This village is thus also called Dakṣiṇa-grāma.

It is also known as Jakṣiṇa or Jakhina-grāma, because Dāūjī once killed a *yakṣiṇī*⁴ here who was obstructing Kṛṣṇa's playful pastimes. Balabhadra-kuṇḍa lies here, and one can take *darśana* of the deities Baladeva and Revatī.

Vihāravana

This is a place of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's playful pastimes (*vihāra*). Here Śrīmatī Rādhikā tested Kṛṣṇa's dancing skills.

priya ko nacvan sikhavat rādhā pyārī!
mān-gumān lakuṭ lie ṭhādhī
manthargati jab hi, ḍarpat kuñj-bihārī

“Rādhā-pyārī is holding a stick of pride and anger (*mān-gumān*) and is teaching Her beloved Kuñja-bihārī to dance. But if, while Rādhā-pyārī is instructing Him, He makes a mistake in a swift movement of the dance, the sharp glances shooting from Pyārījī's eyes punish Him.”

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Vihāra-kuṇḍa lies here. This is where Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boy friends performed water-sports and had the cows drink its pure and sweet water. Nearby is a very attractive grove of *kadamba* trees, in which one can see the imprints of the Lord's lotus feet under a small canopy.

Basauntī and Rāla-grāma

Basauntī currently goes by the name of Basatī, and Rāla by the name of Rāra-grāma. When Nanda Bābā left Gokula-Mahāvana with his family and moved to Chaṭṭikarā, his friend Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja resided in Basauntī-grāma. This place received the name Basauntī because he resided (*bāsa karnā*) here. Nearby is Rāla-grāma, where Śrīmatījī performed Her childhood pastimes (*bālyā-lilā*). In Her youth She performed some pastimes (*paugaṇḍa-lilās*) in Basauntī. Varsānā, Jāvaṭa and Rādhā-kuṇḍa are places of Her teenage pastimes (*kiśora-lilās*). However, the place of Her highest and most perfect playful pastimes (*lilā-vilāsa*) is Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Nearby are Balabhadra-kuṇḍa, a temple of Balabhadra and a grove of *kadamba* trees.

Aḍīṅga

This village is situated nine miles west of Mathurā and four miles east of Govardhana on the main road between these places. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* obstructed the *sakhīs'* way demanding tax from them. Therefore the name of the village is Aḍīṅga. The Hindi word *aḍnā* means “to obstruct”.

Here, in Killola-kuṇḍa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma relished joyful water-sports (*jal-killola*).

Mādhurī-kuṇḍa

Two miles south-east of Aḍīṅga is Mādhurī-kuṇḍa, the charming place of Rādhā's dear *sakhī* Mādhurī. It is also the place where the poet Mādhurī dāsajī performed his *bhajana*.

Mayūra-grāma

This place is situated two miles south-west of Bahulāvāna. After seeing the dancing of the peacocks (*mayūra*) here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa started dancing with great pleasure in the midst of His beloved *gopīs*. The peacocks very happily gave one of their beautiful multi-coloured feathers as an offering to Kṛṣṇa, which He placed on His head. Mayūra-kuṇḍa is a place of *darśana* here.

Chaknā-grāma

This village is situated near Mayūra-grāma. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the *sakhās* were out tending the cows, the *gopīs* here fed them buttermilk (*chāch*) to the boys' full satisfaction.

Endnotes

¹ *saundaryam lalanāli-dhairya-
dalanam lilā ramā-stambhinī
tiryām kandukitādri-varyam
amalāḥ pāre-ṣarārdham guṇāḥ
śīlam sarva-janānurañjanam aho
yasyāyam asmat-prabhur viśvam
viśva-janīna-kīrtir avatāt
kṛṣṇe jagan-mohanaḥ*

² *śrī-rādhikāyāḥ priyatā svarūpatā
suśīlatā nartana-gāna-cāturī
guṇāli-sampata kavītā ca rājate
jagan-mohana-citta-mohinī*

³ *vamśī-dhārī jagan-nārī
citta-hārī sa sārīke
vihārī gopa-nāribhir
jīyān madana-mohanaḥ*

⁴ A *yakṣiṇī* is a female *yakṣa*, a ghostly follower of the demigod Kuvera, the treasurer of the demigods.







*“Among all the gopīs,
Śrīmatī Rādhā
is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s
prāṇa-vallabhā,
the dear most beloved
of His life. Similarly,
Rādhā’s dear kuṇḍa
is also extremely
dear to Him.”*





Rādhā-kuṇḍa
‡ Śyāma-kuṇḍa





he *Padma Purāṇa* states:

*yathā rādhā priyā viṣṇoḥ
tasyāḥ kuṇḍaṁ priyaṁ tathā
sarva-gopīṣu sevaikā
viṣṇoratyanta-vallabhā*

“Among all the *gopīs*, Śrīmatī Rādhā is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *prāṇa-vallabhā*, the dear most beloved of His life. Similarly, Rādhā’s dear *kuṇḍa* is also extremely dear to Him.”

The *Varāha Purāṇa*¹ declares: “O Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, O Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa, You destroy all sins and award liberation in the form of *prema*. I bow down to you again and again.” The different *Purāṇas* are filled with innumerable descriptions of the glories of these two *kuṇḍas*.

In *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* (text 53)², Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī prays: “Śrī Govardhana, is the arena of the nectarean



rāsa, where the most confidential amorous pastimes of the Divine Couple take place. Because it and other places are situated in Śrī Vṛndāvana, Vṛndāvana has become exceedingly charming. Yet the glories of Vṛndāvana, what to speak of Vraja-manḍala's other pastime places, are not equal to a mere shadow of a particle of the glories of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa. I take shelter of this Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, which is more dear to Śrī Mukunda than His own life."

Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa lies in a village named Āriṭa, about three



Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa

miles north-east of Govardhana and fourteen miles from Mathurā and Vṛndāvana. Ariṣṭāsura was a servant of Kāmsa who assumed the form of a bull and attacked Kṛṣṇa with the aim of killing Him, but Kṛṣṇa killed him instead at this place.

At Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, perform Their midday pastimes, and freely enjoy a variety of amorous pastimes without obstruction. This is not possible anywhere else. Therefore, Rādhā-kuṇḍa is considered to be the topmost place



Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa

of *bhajana*, superior even to Nandagaon, Varsānā, Vṛndāvana and Govardhana. This confidential place, surcharged with the highest and most sublime loving transcendental sentiments, was therefore revealed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself, who is endowed with the sentiment and lustre of Śrī Rādhā. Previously, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī and Śrī Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī also came to Vraja, where they revealed various pastime places of Kṛṣṇa; but even they did not reveal this most confidential of places. Only Śrī Gaurasundara, who is Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa combined, was able to do so.

The appearance of Rādhā-kuṇḍa & Śyāma-kuṇḍa

Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed Ariṣṭāsura during the day. That same night, He met with Śrī Rādhikā and His other beloveds here. He was very eager to embrace Śrīmatī Rādhikā, but as soon as He reached out to do so, She jokingly stepped back and said, “Today, You have killed a bull, which belongs to the cow family. You have therefore



Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa

committed the sin of killing a cow. Please do not touch My pure body.”

Smiling, Kṛṣṇa answered, “O dear most one, I killed a demon who had deceitfully assumed the form of a bull, so how can sin touch Me?”

Śrīmatījī insisted, “Whatever he was, he was in the form of a bull when You killed him, so You are definitely guilty of the sin of killing a cow.” The *sakhīs* fully supported Her words.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked how He could atone for this sin. Śrīmatījī smiled and answered, “The only atonement is to bathe in every holy place in the world.” Hearing this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa created a wide *kuṇḍa* simply by striking His heel on the ground. He then summoned all the holy places from all over the planet to come there. Uncountable holy places promptly came before Kṛṣṇa in their personified forms, and Kṛṣṇa asked them to enter the *kuṇḍa* as water. Within a moment, the *kuṇḍa* was filled with pure, sacred water. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa had bathed in that *kuṇḍa* He again tried to embrace Śrīmatījī, but in

response to the bragging of Her dear most beloved, Śrīmatī Rādhikā now wanted to manifest a *kuṇḍa* full of water that was larger and more exquisite than Kṛṣṇa's. She and Her *sakhīs* stubbornly dug out a very attractive *kuṇḍa* nearby with their bracelets, but not so much as a drop of water appeared in it. Kṛṣṇa joked that they could take water from His *kuṇḍa*, but Śrīmatījī along with Her innumerable *sakhīs* indignantly prepared themselves to bring water from Mānasi-gaṅgā in clay pots. Śrī Kṛṣṇa signalled to the holy places that they should insist that Śrīmatījī and Her *sakhīs* fill up their *kuṇḍa* with water from His. The holy places personified prayed to Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs* and glorified them in many ways. Thus they pleased Her. She gave them permission to enter Her *kuṇḍa* and immediately, a current of water flowed from Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa into Rādhā-kuṇḍa. With great pleasure, Śrī Kṛṣṇa bathed and sported with Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *sakhīs* in the water of this dear *kuṇḍa*.

These two *kuṇḍas* manifested at midnight on Kṛṣṇāṣṭamī (the eighth day of the dark moon) in the month of Kārtika; therefore, thousands of people bathe here at midnight on this day, which is known as Bahulāṣṭamī. The *Padma Purāṇa* states: "Radiantly beautiful Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is situated at the foot of Govardhana Hill. Faithful people who bathe here on Kṛṣṇāṣṭamī in the month of Kārtika receive *prema-bhakti* and thus serve Śrī Rādhā-Kuñjabihārī Śrī Hari."³ This same *Purāṇa* also states: "Unalloyed devotees of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa who go to Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa on the day of Dīpāvalī in the month of Kārtika are granted a vision of the complete Vraja-manḍala as well the entire universe."⁴

The history of the *kuṇḍas* after Śrī Kṛṣṇa left for Dvārakā

Some time after Śrī Kṛṣṇa had left for Dvārakā, both *kuṇḍas* disappeared. While uncovering the pastime places of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson, Mahārāja Vajranābha⁵, restored these two *kuṇḍas* under the guidance of Śāṅḍilya and other sages. Five thousand years later, however, they had again disappeared. When

Rādhā-kuṇḍa & Śyāma-kuṇḍa

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to this place, He inquired from the local people about Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, but they could provide Him with no information. They could only tell Him about Kālī-kheta and Gaurī-kheta that lay before them, two fields which contained a little water. Śrīman Mahāprabhu reverentially addressed Kālī-kheta as Śyāma-kuṇḍa and Gaurī-kheta as Rādhā-kuṇḍa and offered His respects to them. Then, as He bathed in them, He became overwhelmed in ecstasy, and losing all composure cried out, “O Rādhā, O Kṛṣṇa!” and fainted. The place where He sat down is now called Tamāla-talā; it is also known as Mahāprabhu’s sitting-place (*baiṭhaka*).



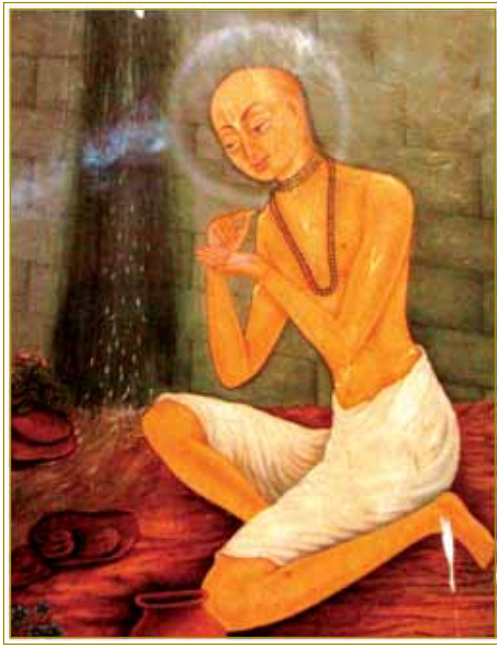
Tamāla-talā



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's
sitting-place at Tamāla-talā

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī at Rādhā-kuṇḍa

After the disappearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī came from Jagannātha Purī and performed *bhajana* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Once, the Mughal emperor Akbar was making his way along this path with his vast army. The emperor's divisions of men, elephants, horses and camels were very thirsty. Seeing Dāsa Gosvāmī, Akbar asked, "Is there any big pond nearby?" Dāsa Gosvāmī motioned to him to take water from Kālī-kheta and Gaurī-kheta. The emperor thought, "This water is not sufficient even for a single elephant. How will it quench the thirst of my entire army?" However, on the repeated requests of Dāsa Gosvāmī, Emperor Akbar encouraged his men to drink. To his amazement, the whole army and its horses, elephants and camels drank to their full satisfaction, yet the water in the ponds did not reduce even slightly.



Śrī Raghunātha
dāsa Gosvāmī

After performing *bhajana* here for some time, the thought of restoring the two *kuṇḍas* entered the mind of Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. But when he remembered the transcendental glories of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, he began to reproach himself for thinking this, because he knew that the *kuṇḍa* is eternally manifest. At that moment, a wealthy person arrived from Badrikāśrama, looking for a topmost renunciant named Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī. He offered his prostrated obeisances at the feet of Gosvāmījī and said, “I am returning from a pilgrimage to Badarikāśrama. Bhagavān Śrī Badrī-nārāyaṇa has sent me to you. On His order I am offering to cover all the expenses required to restore these two ponds to their original, charming forms. Kindly accept my offer.” Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī became speechless. Earlier he had rejected this idea, but now, knowing it to be the desire of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, he began the work of reconstructing the two *kuṇḍas*.

While Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa was being restored, the banks easily formed a rectangular shape of perfect symmetry. Śyāma-kuṇḍa was also to be rectangular, but, to do this some trees had to be cut down. That night, while Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī was performing *bhajana*, he dozed off, and as if in a dream, he saw five men standing before him. “We are the five Pāṇḍavas,” they said. “As trees, we are worshipping the Youthful Couple here, so please do not cut us down. Rather, let the shape of the pond be crooked.” For this reason, Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī did not have the trees cut down, and allowed the outline of the *kuṇḍa* to remain crooked, just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa is crooked. He simply had the pond deepened, and its *ghāṭas* properly restored. Both *kuṇḍas* are still the same shape today, and over the years a few repairs have been carried out.



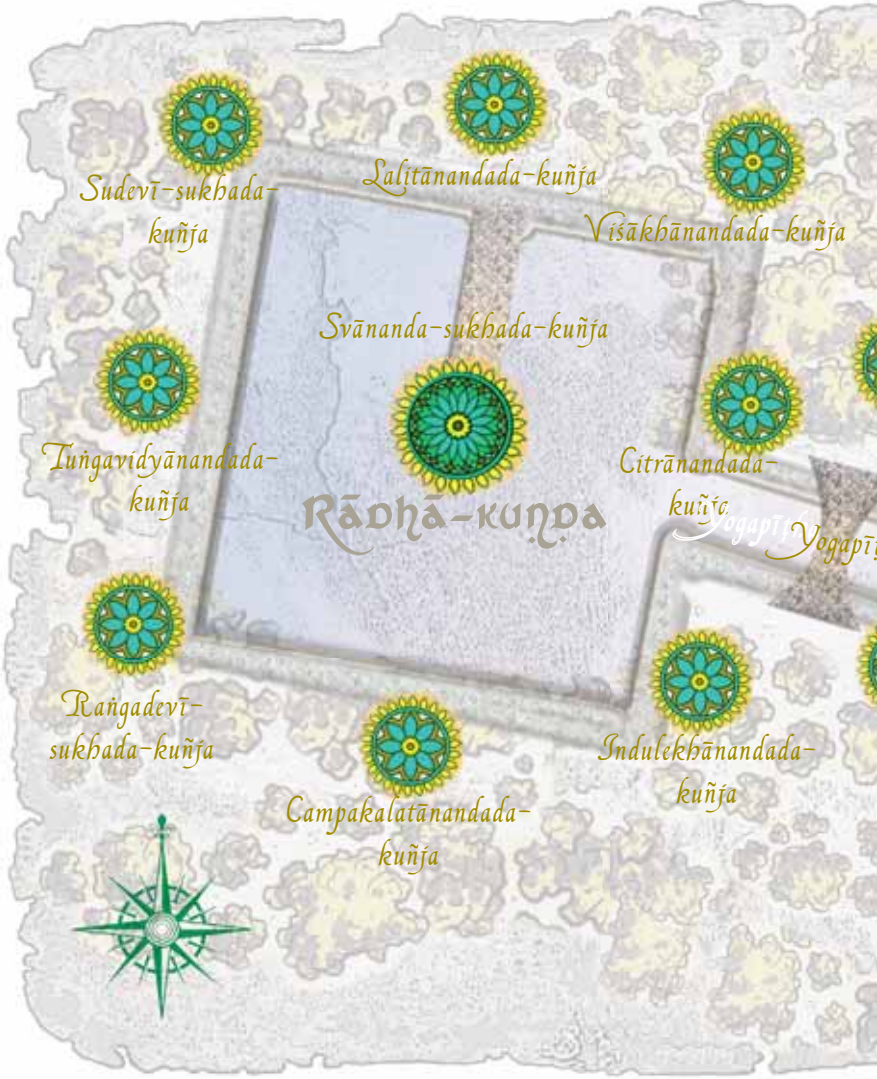
Girirāja-Govardhana stretches from north to south, taking the shape of a peacock. Pūñcharī is his tail, which is in the south, and Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, which are his two eyes, are in the north.

The kuṇḍas as described in Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta and Govinda-lilāmṛta

In *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* and *Govinda-lilāmṛta*, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja respectively describe Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa in delightful, nectarean ways: Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the source of all incarnations; He is the origin of everything, yet He is without origin; He is the personification of all nectarean mellows (*akhila rasāmṛta-mūrti*) and the source of all power (*sarva-śaktimān*). Even so, He is subservient to the *prema* of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the embodiment of *mahābhāva* and the topmost of all of His beloveds. Śrī Kṛṣṇa always establishes the glories of His beloved Kīśorījī, and considers Her superior to Himself. Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa are non-different from Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Śyāmasundara Themselves, and thus Kṛṣṇa also attributes more importance to Rādhā-kuṇḍa than to Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

North of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the *kuñja* of Śrī Lalitā-devī, Lalitānandada, which is shaped like a golden, eight-petalled lotus. In the north-east is Viśākhānandada, the bejewelled *kuñja* of Viśākhā Sakhī, which is shaped like a sixteen-petalled lotus. In the east is Citrānandada, the *kuñja* of Citrā Sakhī, which displays an amazing variety of forms and colours. In the south-east is the *kuñja* of Indulekhā Sakhī, Indulekhānandada. It is shaped like an eight-petalled lotus and is made of diamonds. In the south is the *kuñja* of Campakalatā Sakhī, Campakalatānandada-kuñja, shaped like a golden lotus. And in the south-west is the lotus-like *kuñja* of Raṅgadevī, Raṅgadevī-sukhada, which is inlaid with blue sapphires. Tuṅgavidyānandada is the *kuñja* of Tuṅgavidyā Sakhī. This *kuñja*, in the west, resembles a lotus made of red rubies. In the north-west lies Ānandada, or Sudevī-sukhada-kuñja, the lotus-shaped *kuñja* of Sudevī, which is inlaid with emeralds. In the centre of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is Anaṅgamañjarī-ānandada-kuñja, shaped like a sixteen-petalled lotus inlaid with moonstones. This *kuñja*, also known as Svānanda-sukhada-kuñja, belongs to Anaṅga Mañjarī.

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It is connected with the bank of the kuṅḍa by a bridge made of moonstones.

In the north-western area of Śrī Śyāma-kuṅḍa is a delightful place made of diamonds, emeralds and other precious stones where Śrīmatī

Kuñjas around Rādhā-kuṇḍa & Śyāma-kuṇḍa



Rādhikā daily takes bath. North of this place is Subalānandada-kuñja, which Subala Sakhā has given to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa take rest here. In the northern part of Śyāma-kuṇḍa is the kuñja of Madhumaṅgala, Madhumaṅgalānandada, which

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is inlaid with white jewels. He has given this *kuñja* to Lalitājī. The Youthful Couple enjoy merriment and laughter here. Ujjvala Sakhā's Ujjvalānandada-kuñja in the north-east, made of red jewels, has been given to Viśākhā Sakhī. In the east is Arjuna Sakhā's Arjunānandada-kuñja, made of blue sapphires, which has been given to Citrā Sakhī. Gandharvānandada-kuñja in the south-east displays a variety of colours and forms, and belongs to Gandharva Sakhā, who has given it to Indulekhā Sakhī. In the south is the green emerald Vidagdhānandada-kuñja, belonging to Vidagdhā Sakhā, who has given this *kuñja* to Campakalatā. Here the Youthful Couple play the game of *chaupada*⁶. Bhr̥ṅga Sakhā's Bhr̥ṅgānandada-kuñja lies in the south-west, and he has given this *kuñja* to Raṅgadevī. In the west is Dakṣasanandānanda-kuñja made of a variety of jewels. Kokila Sakhā's Kokilānandada-kuñja, also in the west, has been presented to Sudevī. At the juncture of the



Saṅgama or Yogapīṭha

two *kuṇḍas* is a platform made of many kinds of jewels. It is also called the *Yogapīṭha* of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

To the south of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa are jewelled swings hanging from the branches of *campaka* trees. Swings inlaid with precious stones hang from the branches of *kadamba* trees to the east. To the west, swings made of jewels hang from the branches of mango trees, and to the north jewelled swings hang from the branches of the *bakula* trees. *Rasika* Śrī Kṛṣṇa plays on these swings with Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the other *sakhīs*.

Surrounding both Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa are wish-fulfilling trees of mango, jackfruit, *kadamba*, *bakula* and so on, which are abundantly laden with flowers and fruits. Around the bases of these trees are platforms made of various precious stones. All seasons are eternally serving the Divine Couple under the guidance of the spring season. *Vṛndā-devī* makes all kinds of arrangements for the service of the Divine Couple. Cuckoos coo and the peacocks dance and make a sweet *ke-kā* sound. Blue and red lotuses and various kinds of *ketakī* flowers frolic on the waves of the divine ponds, while intoxicated, buzzing bees hover above. Royal swans, *cakravākas* and cranes play in the water with their consorts, making sweet sounds. Different kinds of birds recite love poetry on the branches of the trees, giving pleasure to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Deer and does roam about in attractive bowers nearby. Except for Śrīmatī Rādhikā's most intimate girlfriends, no one can enter this forest.

Jhūlana-talā

On the western side of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is *Jhūlana-talā*. Once, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī and Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī were sitting near Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭī* on the north-eastern side of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, immersed in narrations about Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī asked Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, "Rūpa, what are you writing these days?" Śrī Rūpa showed Sanātana *Cāṭu-puṣpāñjali*, a *stotra*⁷ that he had composed. The first verse reads:

*nava-gorocanā-gaurīm praverendīvarām barām
maṇi-stavaka-vidyoti veṇī-vyālaṅgaṇā-phaṇām*

“O Vṛṇḍāvanēśvarī, I offer prayers to You again and again. You are golden-complexioned, like ever-fresh *gorocanā*⁸. Your cloth is the colour of a beautiful blue lotus flower and the upper part of Your long braid, which is decorated with jewels, appears like the hood of a black female serpent.”

When Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī read this, he said, “Rūpa, with the phrase *veṇī-vyālaṅgaṇā-phaṇām* you compare the wavy, black braided hair of Śrīmatī Rādhikā to a poisonous black female serpent. She who possesses all qualities, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, is extremely charming, tender and sweet and is the beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I do not like this comparison.” Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī smiled and humbly requested Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī to suggest a better description, but Sanātana Gosvāmī could not think of one at that moment. “I will correct it later,” he said and went on his way, contemplating the matter. When he reached this place to the west of the *kuṇḍa*, he saw a young cowherd girl swinging on a beautiful swing that was hanging from the branches of a *kadamba* tree. Her friends were pushing Her to and fro, singing a *mallāra-rāga*. Suddenly, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī saw a black female serpent with an expanded hood slithering on the swaying black tresses of that young girl. Thinking to save Her from the serpent, he ran towards Her, shouting, “*Lālī, lālī*, beware! There is a black serpent in Your hair!” When he came nearer, however, everything disappeared. There was no *kiśorī*, no *sakhis* and no swing. He wept with happiness and returned to Rūpa Gosvāmī saying, “Rūpa, your simile is perfect. Śrīmatī Kiśorī kindly granted me *darśana* of Her waving braid. There is no need for you to make any correction.” It is at this Jhūlana-talā that Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī had *darśana* of Śrī Rādhā.

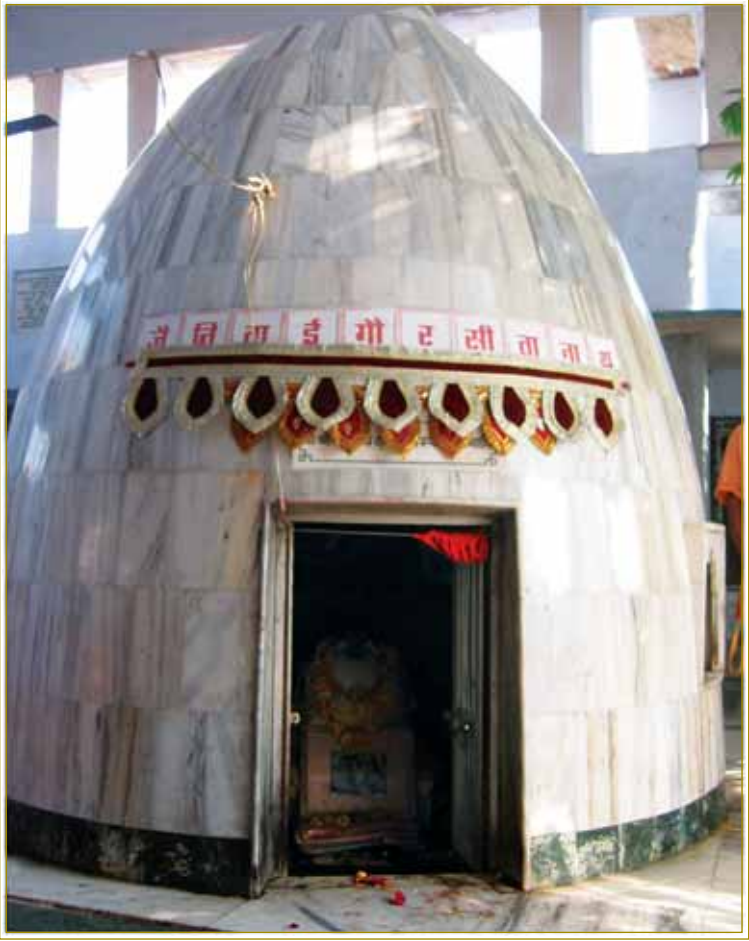
Some of the surrounding temples

Near a *kadamba* tree in the south-western part of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is an ancient temple of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. According to hearsay, the mendicant Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī found these deities of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa while he was renovating the *kuṇḍa* and gave Them to the Vrajavāsīs to worship and serve.

Nearby, in the north-western part of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa is the temple of Śrī Śyāmasundara, the worshipful deity of Śrī Śyāmananda Prabhu. North of this temple is Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's worshipful deity Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara, and north of that temple is Śrīnivāsa Ācārya Prabhu's place of *bhajana*. There is a deity of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu here. East of Śrī Śyāmasundara's temple, in the northern part of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, is the *ghāṭa* and sitting-place of Śrī Jāhnavā Ṭhākurānī. Near her *ghāṭa* is the temple of

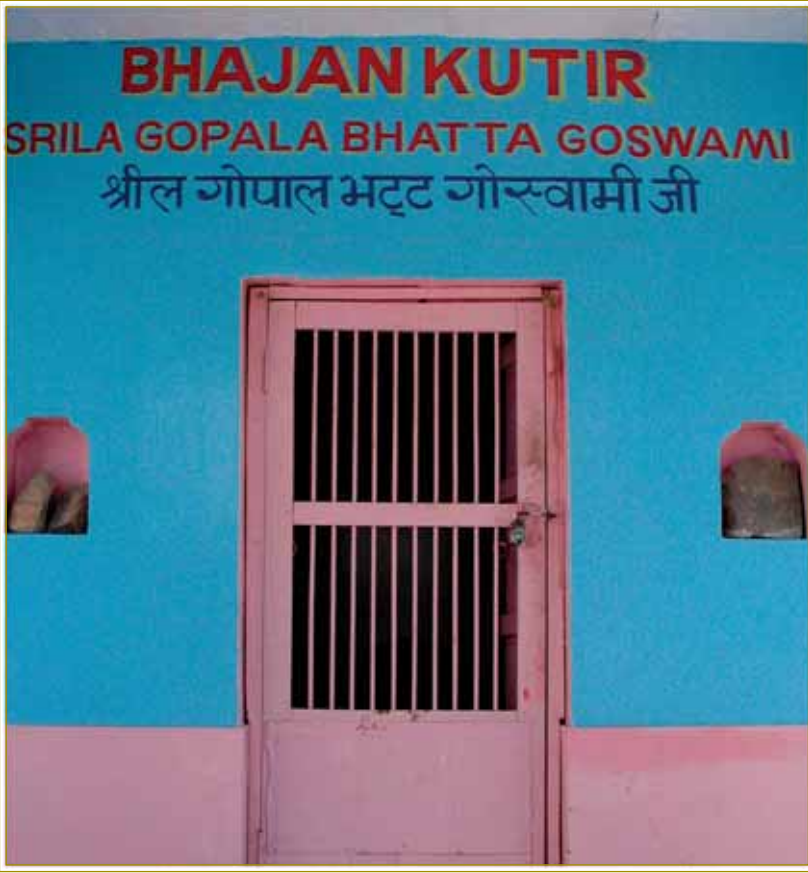


Śrī Jāhnavā Ṭhākurānī's sitting-place



Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's puṣpa-samādhi

Śrī Gopinātha. Adjacent to that temple is Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's place of residence and his *puṣpa-samādhi*. Proceeding from here, one comes to the temple of Śrī Govindadeva. Near this temple is the *śilā* of Śrī Girirāja's tongue. On the eastern bank of Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and near this to the east, on the bank of Śyāma-kuṇḍa, is the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.



Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

After coming from Jagannātha Purī, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī used to live near Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa at Lagmohana-kuṇḍa. Once, during Śrī Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes, on the day of the Holi festival, Śrīmatī Rādhikā was sitting here with Her girlfriends when Śaṅkha-cūḍa unexpectedly seized Her and ran away. Kṛṣṇa pursued and killed him and, removing the jewel from the demon's forehead, gave it to Śrī Baladeva. He in turn gave the jewel into the hands of Dhaniṣṭhā to give to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Although Śrī

Dāsa Gosvāmī first used to live at this Lagmohana-kuṇḍa, he later began performing *bhajana* on the banks of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

One day, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was performing his *bhajana* under the open sky at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. He was so absorbed that he was not conscious of his body and mind, and streams of tears flowed from his eyes. Occasionally, the words “O Rādhā, O Rādhā” came from his mouth. At this time, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī regularly came to see him. Once, from a distance, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī saw a ferocious tiger and tigress walk past Raghunātha dāsa, drink water from the nearby *kuṇḍa* and then return by the same path, as if they had not seen him.

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī approached Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī and very affectionately, like an elder brother, advised him to perform his *bhajana* in a hut. Śrī Sanātana had a leaf-hut built for Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī, and instructed him to perform his *bhajana* there. That hut no longer exists, but a solid one made of cement has been constructed in its place.

Near this *bhajana-kuṭī*, the five Pāṇḍavas – Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva – performed *bhajana* as trees. Some time ago, these trees became unmanifest and disappeared from our vision. Between this *bhajana-kuṭī* and the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Gopāl Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī are the *samādhis* of Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. North of Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī’s and Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s *bhajana-kuṭis* is the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. It is said that he wrote some portions of Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* here, but most of it was actually written in his *bhajana-kuṭī* at the Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple in Vṛndāvana.

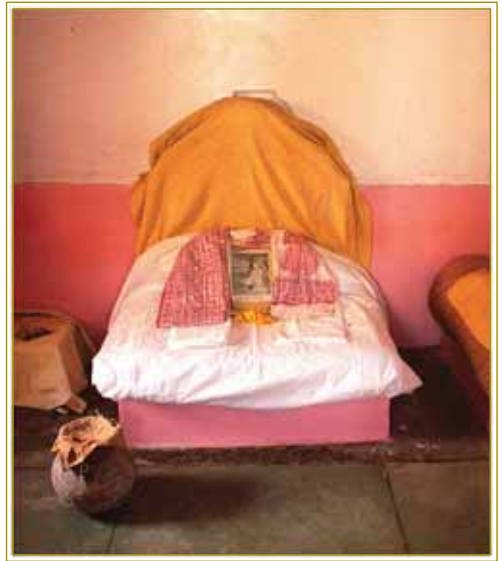
Nearby, in the north-eastern area, is a temple of Śrī Gadādhara-Caitanya, and north-west of it is the Śrī Rādhā-Govinda Temple. One may take *darśana* of the Jihvā-sīlā of Śrī Govardhana near the entrance of this temple.



Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

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*Inside the bhajana-kuṭī of
Śrī Gopāl Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī
(right) and of
Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja
Gosvāmī (below)*





The samādhis of
Śrīla Raghunātha
Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī (left),
Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa
Kavirāja Gosvāmī
(middle) and Śrīla
Raghunātha
dāsa Gosvāmī (right)

Jihvā-śilā and other nearby places

After finishing his daily morning ablutions, Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī used to bathe with the water of Gopī-kūpa, situated to the east of Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa. He would then bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Once, while drawing water from Gopī-kūpa, he also drew a *govardhana-śilā* out of the well. After taking his bath that day, Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī went on his way; but while doing *bhajana* at night, he took some rest. In a dream he saw that the *śilā* was actually the tongue (*jihvā*) of Śrī Girirāja. He also received an order from Śrī Girirāja to worship the *śilā* according to the proper method. He had a temple constructed near the entrance of the Govindadeva Temple and arranged for the *śilā* to be properly worshipped there. This same *śilā* can be seen there today. After this event, Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī stopped taking bath with the water of Gopī-kūpa, and had a new well constructed on the eastern bank of Lalitā-kuṇḍa for bathing. This new well remains there today.

Proceeding from here, one arrives at the *kuñja* of Narahari Sarkāra. Lalitā-kuṇḍa is situated on the location of Lalitānandada-



Gopī-kūpa

Rādhā-kuṇḍa ၵ Śyāma-kuṇḍa



Śihvā-silā



Lalitā-kuṇḍa

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

kuñja. Viśākhā-kuṇḍa and many other *kuṇḍas* are included within Lalitā-kuṇḍa but many of them have disappeared. Then come the temples of Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārījī and Śrī Sītānātha. Near Lagmohana-kuṇḍa, on the *parikramā* path, lies the *samādhi* of Śrī Rājendra Gosvāmī. He gave up his life at this place, in separation from Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Rādhā-Kuñjabihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha

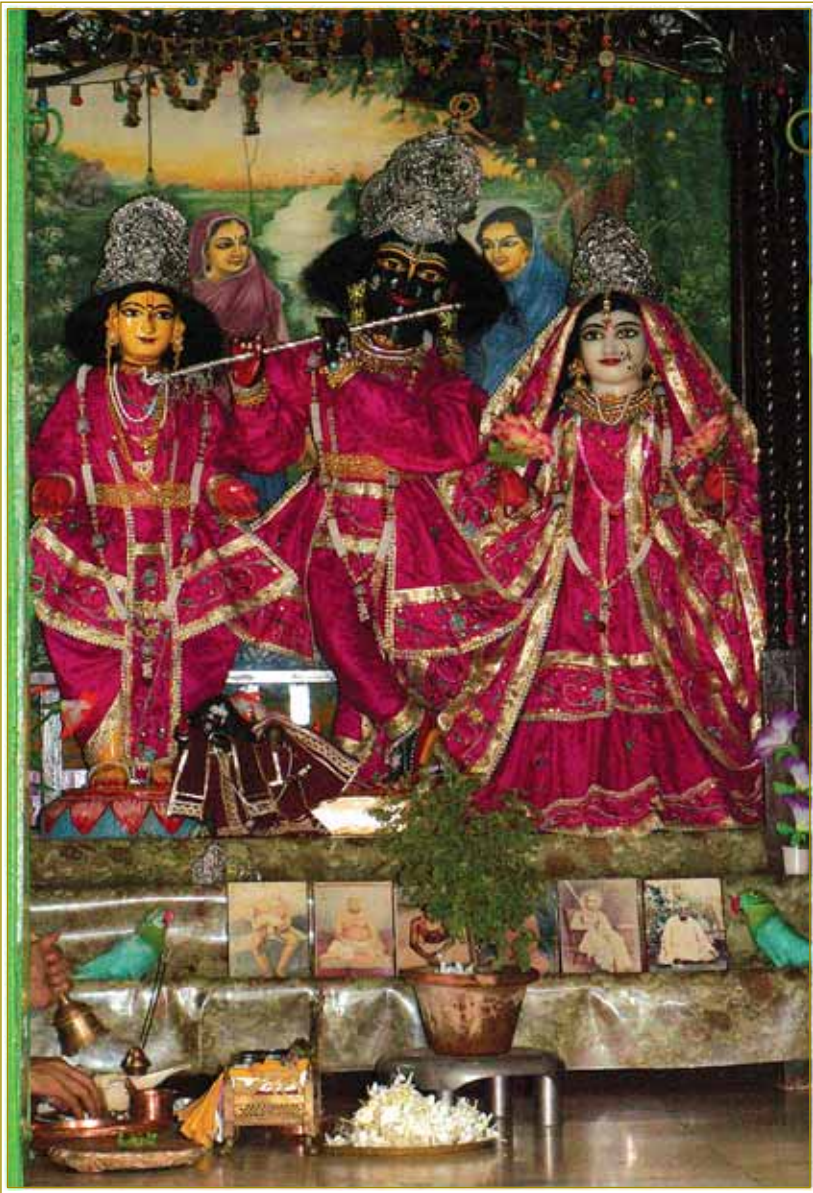
On the western side of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is Śrī Rādhā-Kuñjabihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha. The deities here, Śrī Rādhā-Kuñjabihārī, were installed by *jagadguru paramahaṁsa parivrājakācārya-varya om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, who propagated pure *vaiṣṇava-dharma* and *śrī-harināma-saṅkīrtana* as practised and preached by Śrīman Mahāprabhu throughout the world. A little further away from Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's *samādhi* is the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, renowned as “the Seventh Gosvāmī”; and the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī.

Śivakhora

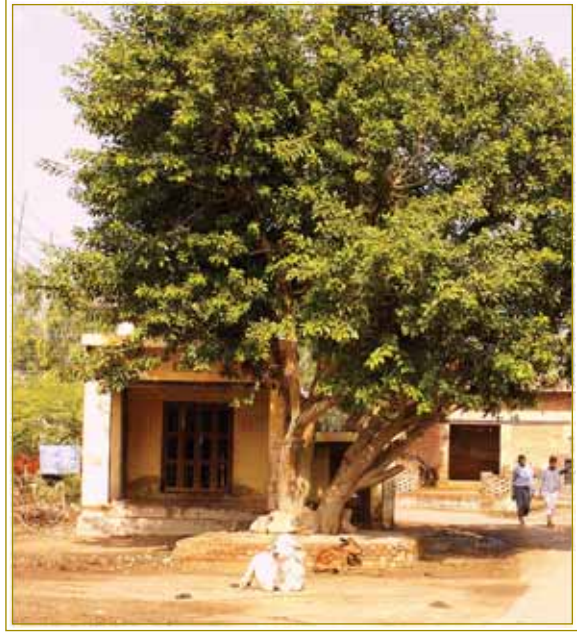
When coming to the village of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa from Uddhava-kuṇḍa, Śivakhora is situated on the right-hand side of the *parikramā* path at the entrance to the village. It is said that in ancient times a lost she-jackal wandered to this place during the day, but the dogs here killed her. Seeing this, the villagers performed her last rites at this place and were struck with wonder when a youthful *gopī* manifested from the she-jackal's body and ascended into the sky. It is said that a living entity who dies at Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa attains Goloka-Vṛndāvana.

Mālyahārīṇī-kuṇḍa

Mālyahārīṇī-kuṇḍa is situated on the western side of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Śrīmatī Rādhikā sat in a bower of *mādhavī* flowers here



Śrī Rādhā-Kuṅjabihārījī



Śivakhora

and strung necklaces of pearls. Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has described this pastime very beautifully in his book *Muktā-carita*. The confidential realizations attained by *mahā-bhāgavatas* in deep meditation are completely true and transcendental.

Once, during the month of Kārtika on the occasion of the Dīpāvalī festival at Girirāja-Govardhana, the Vrajavāsīs were busily absorbed in decorating their cows and other animals with various kinds of ornaments. The *gopīs* also brought various ornaments from their homes to decorate the cows. Śrī Rādhikā and Her girlfriends sat on the *mādhavī* terrace near the Mālyahāriṇī-kuṇḍa making several kinds of beautiful pearl ornaments. Meanwhile, Śrī Kṛṣṇa arrived there, having heard of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's activities from the mouth of the parrot Vicakṣaṇa, and asked for some pearls. However, Rādhikā and Her *gopī* friends refused, proudly giving several reasons why they could not give Him any. Nonetheless, Śrī Kṛṣṇa insisted, “*Sakhīs*, if you cannot give Me a large quantity of pearls,



Mālyahārīṇī-kuṇḍa

then at least give Me a few with which to decorate My beloved cows Haṁsinī and Hariṇī.” But the headstrong *gopīs* rejected this request also. Lalitā collected a palmful of pearls of the very finest quality. She held them out to Kṛṣṇa, and taunted, “Kṛṣṇa, these pearls that You want to decorate Your cows with are most precious. They are not ordinary. Do You understand?”

Disappointed, Śrī Kṛṣṇa returned home where He sulkily took some pearls from Mother Yaśodā. He dug holes in the soil near the bank of the Yamunā, put manure in them and planted the pearls. He then fenced the area to protect the growing plants from animals and birds and irrigated the field daily, with a large quantity of cow’s milk. He asked the *gopīs* to donate some milk for this, but they refused that request as well.

All were amazed when, within a few days, each and every pearl began to sprout. The plants grew right before everyone’s eyes, and began to bear pearl fruit, from which extremely beautiful pearls grew in abundance. When the *gopīs* went to the bank of the Yamunā to fetch water, they saw this astonishing field of pearls and started

to whisper among themselves. Śrī Kṛṣṇa happily harvested a huge quantity of pearls, brought them home and placed them in the lap of His mother. “Kanhaiyā, where did You get such excellent pearls?” she asked in amazement. Śrī Kṛṣṇa told her the whole story.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* now began stringing uncountable pearl necklaces for all their cows, and, decorated with these pearl necklaces, these cows began to wander everywhere. Unable to tolerate His success, the *gopīs* secretly brought pearls from their homes and began to sow them as Śrī Kṛṣṇa had done. They irrigated the field with an abundance of cow’s milk as He did. Their pearls sprouted, but to their surprise, only into thorny creepers. The *gopīs* became worried. They told Śrī Kṛṣṇa what had happened, and asked Him for some of His pearls. But Kṛṣṇa, the crown jewel of *rasikas*, scornfully rejected their request. Finally He accepted kisses and embraces, and enjoyed the touch of their transcendental limbs in exchange for His pearls. Mālyahārīṇī-kuṇḍa received its name by virtue of this confidential pastime.

Famous *ghāṭas* of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa & Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa

- (1) **Govinda-ghāṭa** – This *ghāṭa* is on the eastern bank of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa between the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and the temple of Bihārījī. It was here that Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī saw Śrīmatī Rādhikā playing on a swing and realised in his heart the secret of the phrase *veṇī-vyālaṅgaṇā-phaṇā* in Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Cāṭu-puṣpāñjali*.
- (2) **Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa** – This *ghāṭa* is situated on the north-western side of Śyāma-kuṇḍa and is very dear to Śrīmatī Rādhikā.
- (3) **Pañca Pāṇḍava-ghāṭa** – This *ghāṭa* is joined to Mānasa-ghāṭa in the northern part of Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa. The five Pāṇḍavas in the form of trees disclosed themselves to Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī above this *ghāṭa*. Here, at the entrance door of the Śrī Gadādhara-Caitanya Temple, is also an old *choharā* tree,



Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa

which disclosed to Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura that it was actually a *brāhmaṇa* from Kāśī.

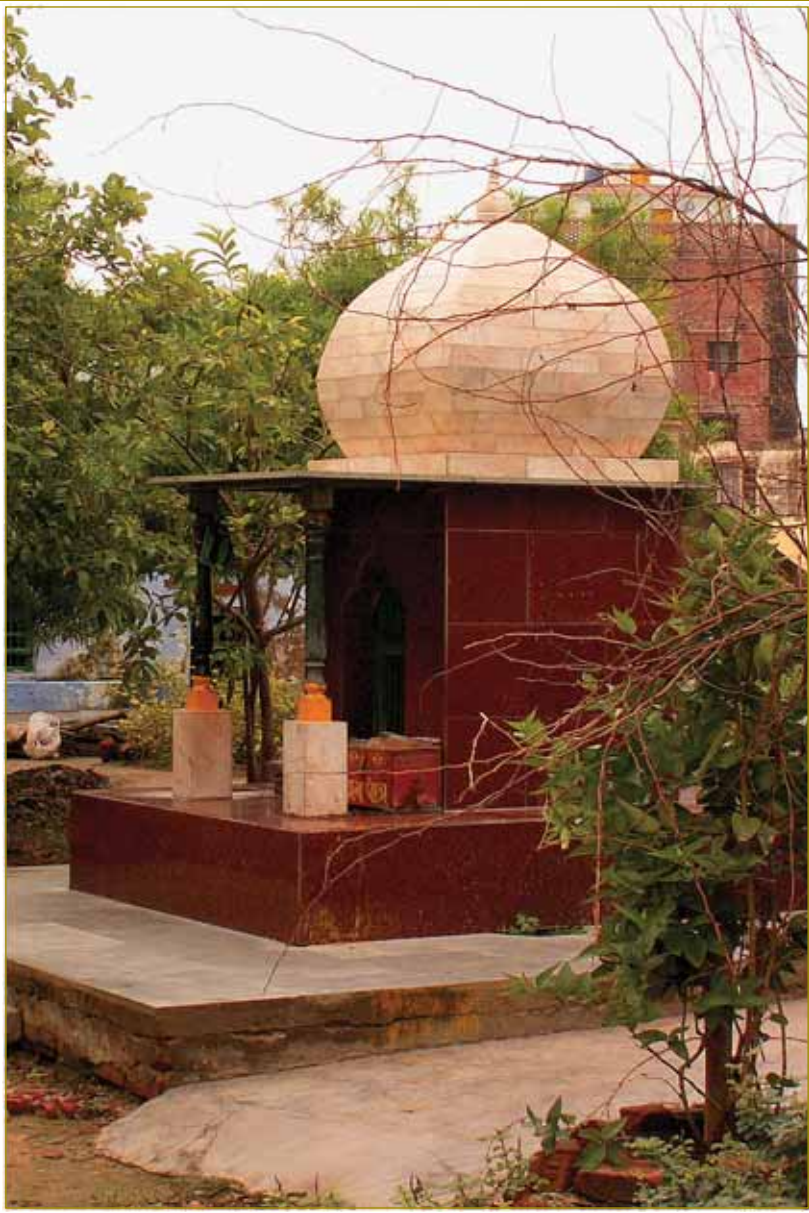
- (4) **Madhumaṅgala-ghāṭa** – Above this *ghāṭa* is Madhumaṅgala's *kuñja*, named Madhumaṅgalānandada, which Madhumaṅgala offered to Śrī Lalitā Sakhī. The sitting-place (*baiṭhaka*) of Hitahari-vaṁśa Gosvāmī is here.
- (5) **Jīva Gosvāmī-ghāṭa** – Nearby this *ghāṭa* is Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭī*. During his stay here, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī daily bathed at this *ghāṭa*.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

- (6) *Gayā-ghāṭa* – Another name for this *ghāṭa* is *Dhana-mādhava-gherā-ghāṭa*. Near this *ghāṭa* is Śrī Mādhavendra Puri's *baiṭhaka* and Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa's place of *bhajana*.
- (7) *Aṣṭa-sakhī-ghāṭa* – This *ghāṭa* lies between *Gayā-ghāṭa* and *Tamāla-talā*.
- (8) *Tamāla-talā-ghāṭa* – This *ghāṭa* lies on the southern bank of Śyāma-kuṇḍa. Śrī Caitanya Mahārabhu sat under a *tamāla*



Śrī Mādhavendra Purī's sitting-place

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

tree here and inquired about the *kuṇḍas* from the villagers, who could offer Him no information. Instead, they pointed out Kālī-kheta and Gaurī-kheta nearby. Mahāprabhu declared them to be Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa and bathed here. This is how He caused Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa, which had been established by Mahārāja Vajranābha, to become manifest for the benefit of the world. Later, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī reconstructed them as we see them today.



Tamāla-talā-ghāṭa

(9) Vallabha-ghāṭa – This *ghāṭa* is situated west of Tamāla-talā on the southern bank of Śyāma-kuṇḍa. Śrī Vallabhācārya sat in the shade of a *choharā* tree here with his associates and glorified both *kuṇḍas*. He remained here for some time and bathed at this *ghāṭa* daily. He would also speak on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam here.



Śrī Vallabhācārya



Śrī Vallabhācārya's sitting-place

- (10) Madana-mohana-ghāṭa – South of this ghāṭa is the temple of Śrī Madana-mohana.
- (11) Saṅgama-ghāṭa – This ghāṭa is situated between Rādhā-kunḍa and Śyāma-kunḍa. The two kunḍas meet under this platform. Saṅgama means “meeting”. This is the Yogapīṭha of the eternal pastimes of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Vaiṣṇavas first bathe in Rādhā-kunḍa and then in Śyāma-kunḍa. It is said that there was an old tamāla tree here that disclosed to one devotee that it was Agastya Ṛṣi.
- (12) Rāsavāḍī-ghāṭa – This ghāṭa is situated in the southern part of Śrī Rādhā-kunḍa. It is the location of a rāsa-maṅḍala.
- (13) Jhūlana-ghāṭa – Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa used to swing (jhūlā jhūlanā) at this ghāṭa, which lies on the western bank of Śrī



Saṅgama-ghāṭa

Rādhā-kuṇḍa). Even today, the young girls of Rādhā-kuṇḍa swing here with great festivity. Another name for this *ghāṭa* is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-ghāṭa.

- (14) **Jāhnavā-ghāṭa** – This *ghāṭa* lies on Rādhā-kuṇḍa’s northern bank and is the bathing-place of Śrī Jāhnavā Ṭhākuraṇī, the wife of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu. Śrī Jāhnavā Ṭhākuraṇī also used to perform *bhajana* here. Her sitting-place remains here to this day.
- (15) **Vajranābha-kuṇḍa** – This *kuṇḍa* is situated in the middle of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa.
- (16) **Kaṅkaṇa-kuṇḍa** – This *kuṇḍa* was built by Śrī Rādhā with the help of Her *sakhīs* using their bracelets (*kaṅkaṇa*). It is situated in the very middle of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

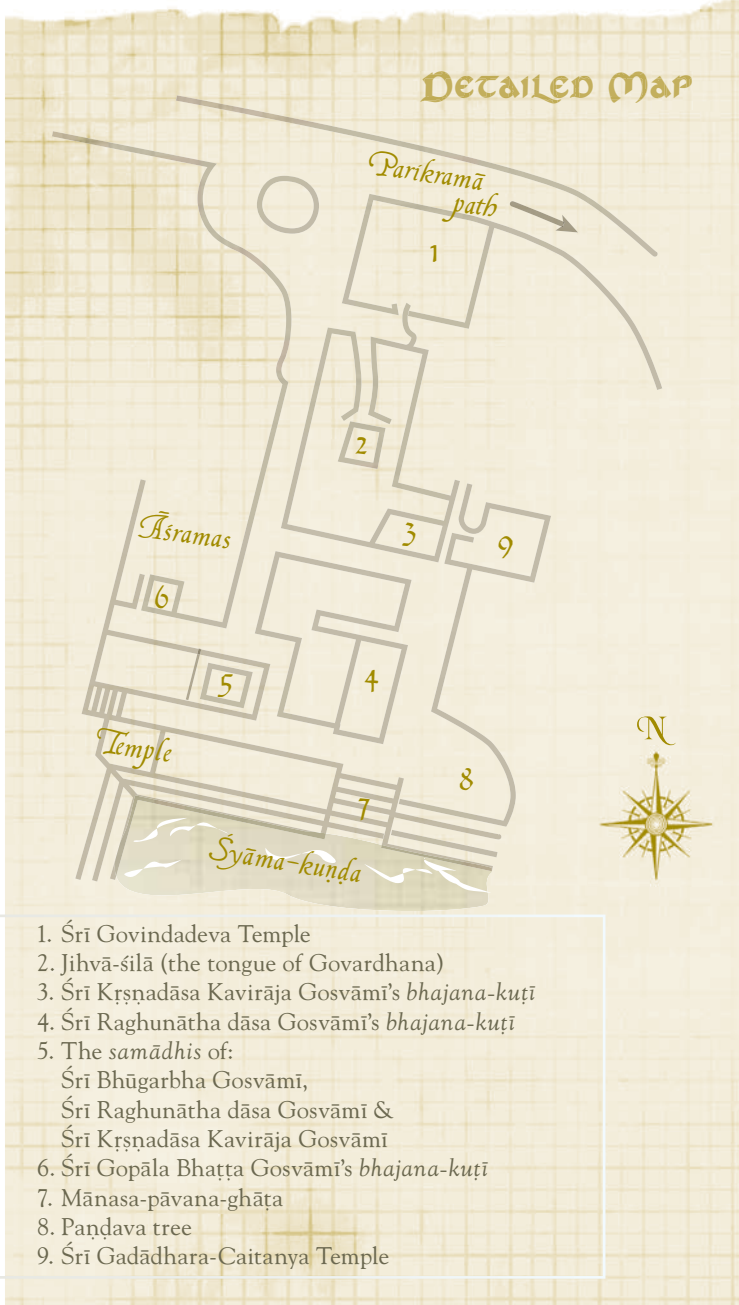
ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



1. Jhūlana-talā
2. Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple
3. Śrī Śyāmasundara Temple
4. Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple
5. Śrīnivāsa Ācārya's bhajana-kuṭī
6. Śrī Jāhnavā-devī's baiṭhaka
7. Śrī Gopinātha Temple
8. Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's puṣpa-samādhi
9. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's bhajana-kuṭī
10. Lalitā-kuṇḍa
11. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī
12. Jīva Gosvāmī-ghāṭa
13. Gayā-ghāṭa
14. Śrī Mādhavendra Purī's baiṭhaka
15. Gopī-kūpa
16. Aṣṭa-sakhī-ghāṭa
17. Tamāla-talā
18. Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva
19. Vallabha-ghāṭa
20. Madana-mohana-ghāṭa
21. Śrī Madana-mohana Temple
22. Saṅgama-ghāṭa
23. Kuṇḍeśvara Mahādeva
24. Śivakhora
25. Mālyahāriṇī-kuṇḍa
26. Śrī Rādhā-Kuñjabihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha

Rādhā-kunḍa & Śyāma-kunḍa





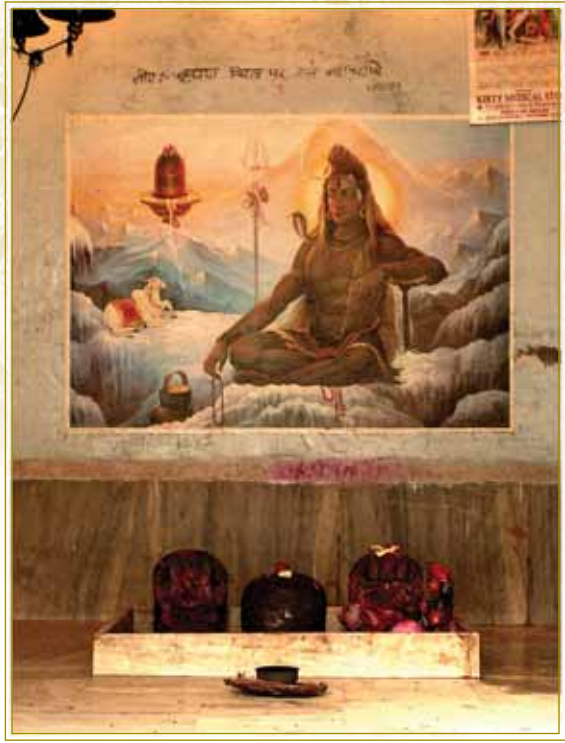
The rāsa-maṇḍalas of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa

- (1) South of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the place of an old *rāsa-maṇḍala*.
A *rāsa-maṇḍala* pavilion has been constructed here.
- (2) North-east of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, behind the temple of Śrī Govindadeva
- (3) In the northern part of the village, south of Bhānukhora
- (4) In the northern part of Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa, north of Rādhā-Vallabha-ghāṭa
- (5) In Nandinī-gherā
- (6) In the temple of Lalita-bihārījī

The seven Mahādevas acting as area-protectors

(kṣetra-pālas) of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa

- (1) Kuṇḍeśvara Mahādeva on the south-western side of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa
- (2) Mahādeva in the west of the village, north of Śivakhora
- (3) Mahādeva in the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Ramañajī
- (4) Mahādeva on the northern side of Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa
- (5) Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva on the south-eastern side of Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa
- (6) Mahīmeśvara Mahādeva near Mālyahārīñī-kuṇḍa
- (7) Mahādeva in the western part of Vallabhācārya's *baiṭhaka*



*Kuṇḍeśvara
Mahādeva*

Endnotes

- 1 *sarva-pāpa-haras tirthaṁ
namaste hari-muktidaḥ
namaḥ kaivalya-nāthāya
rādhā-kṛṣṇa-bhidhāyine*
- 2 *śrī-vṛndāvipinaṁ suramyam api
tac chrīmān sa govardhanaḥ
sā rāsa-sthalikāpy alaṁ rasamayī
kiṁ tāvad anyat sthalam

yasyāpy aṁśa-lavena nārhati manāk
samyam va mukundasya tat
prāṇebhyo 'py adhika-priyeva
dayitaṁ tat kuṇḍam evāśraye*
- 3 *govardhana girau ramye
rādhā-kuṇḍam priyam hareḥ*
- 4 *dīpotsave kārṭike ca
rādhā-kuṇḍe yudhiṣṭhira
dṛśyate sakalaṁ viśvam
bhṛtyair viṣṇu-paraṇāyaiḥ*
- 5 *Vrajanābha Mahārāja is the son
of Aniruddha, who is the son
of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's son Pradyumna.
Vrajanābha Mahārāja was
present at the time of Mahārāja
Parikṣit.*

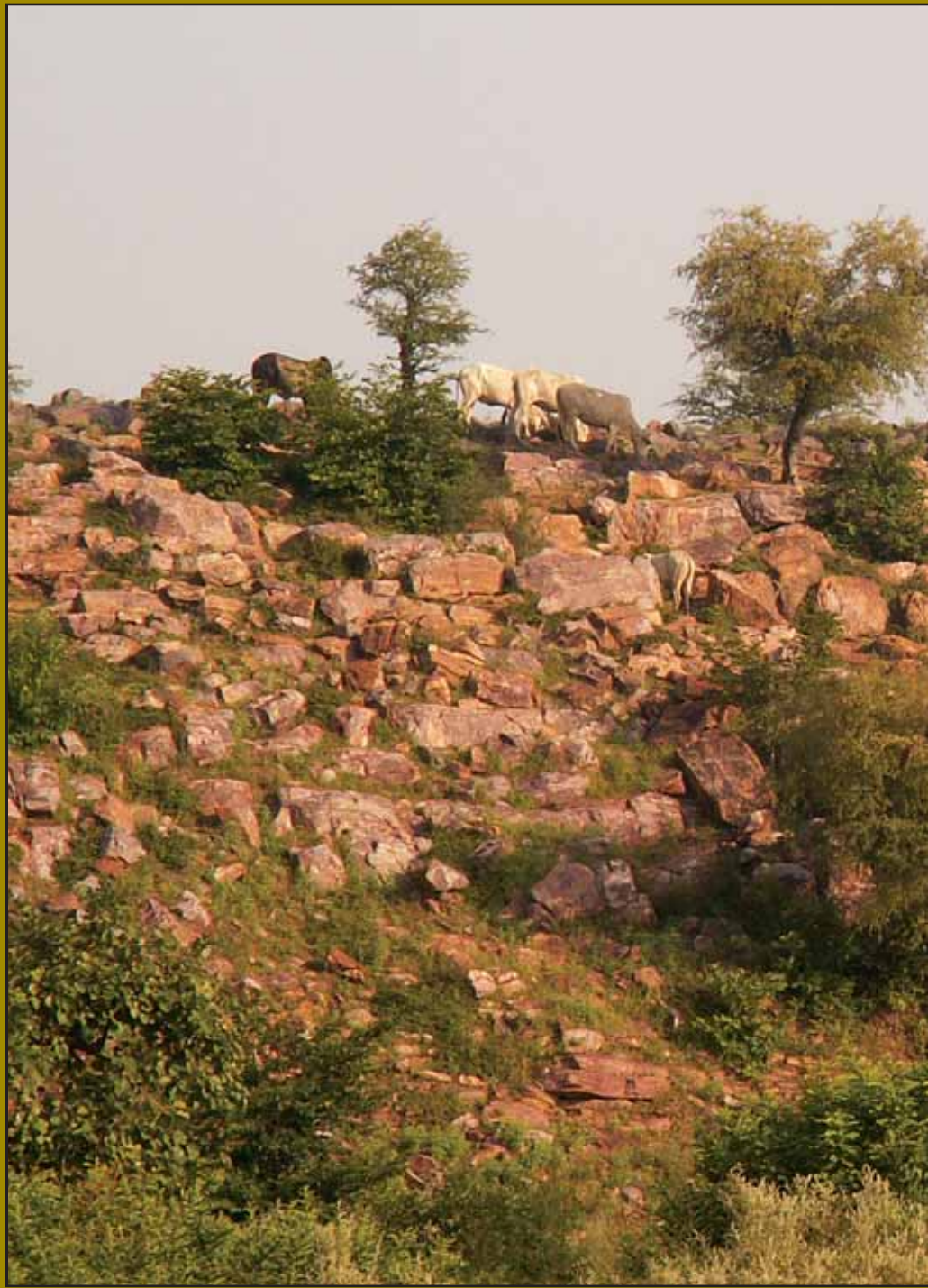


*Mahīmeśvara
Mahādeva*



*Bankhaṇḍī
Mahādeva*

- 6 *Chaupaḍa* is a game similar to backgammon, played by two players on a cloth or board of cross-shaped layout. The players have three dice, and sixteen counters each.
- 7 A *stotra* is a hymn of praise in which the verses are sung, in contradistinction to the scriptures which are recited.
- 8 A bright golden pigment that emerges when rainwater falls upon the hoof of a cow at the time of the lunar constellation called Svaṭi.







Govārdhana

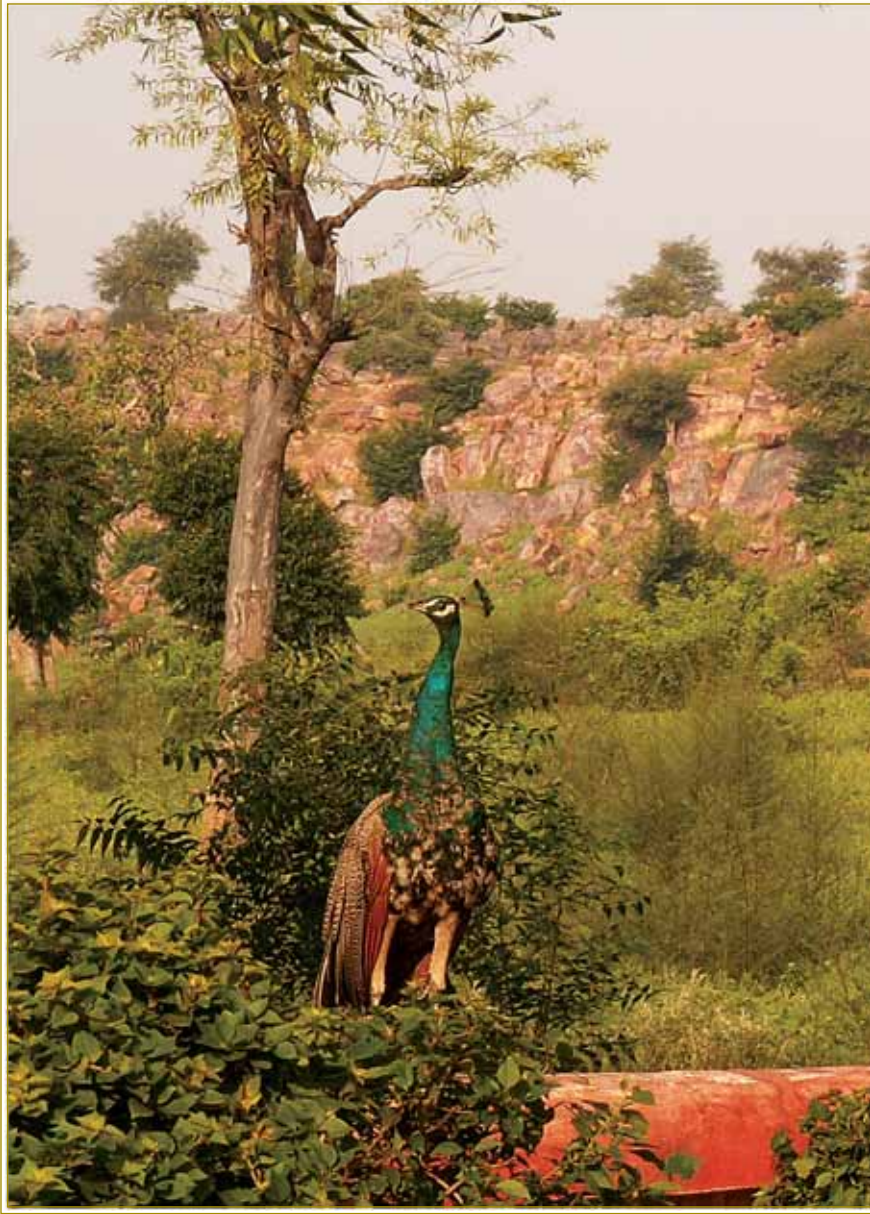


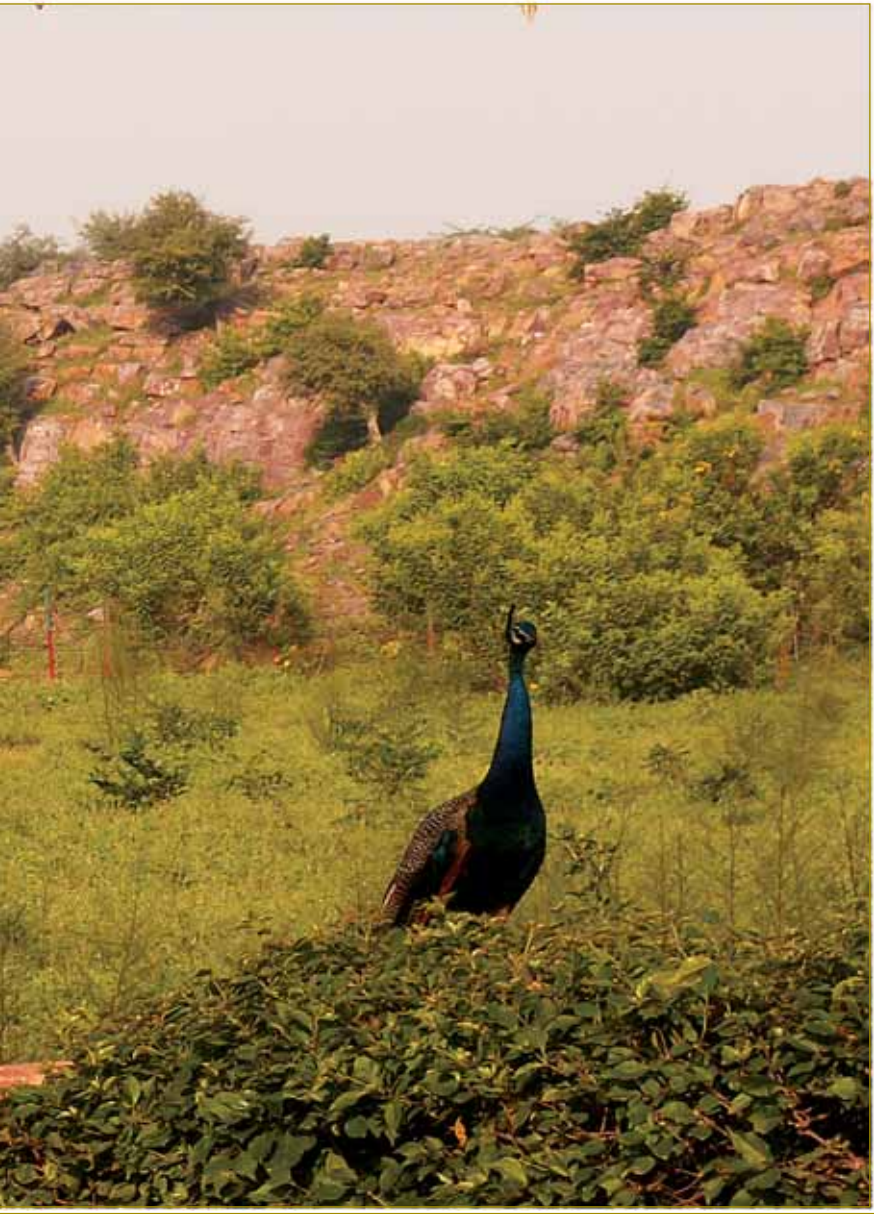




irirāja-Govardhana is situated some fourteen miles west of Mathurā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa protected Vraja by holding the enormous Govardhana Hill on the little finger of His left hand for seven days, thus shattering the pride of Indra. Girirāja has descended from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode Goloka-Vṛndāvana to Vraja on this Earth planet. He came with secluded bowers,

caves, pure lakes and ponds, and various minerals, like red ochre (*gairika*), that are useful in the service of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Girirāja-Govardhana is non-different from Kṛṣṇa in *tattva*, yet he is considered to be *hari-dāsa-varya*, the best among all the servants of Hari. The *gopīs* spoke of him as follows: "O my friend, this Girirāja is the topmost among Śrī Hari's servants and is absorbed in supreme bliss, being always touched by Śrī Balarāma's and Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Girirāja serves and satisfies Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, the cowherd boys and the cows by providing them with water from his pure lakes and ponds, with lush grass, fruits, roots and various minerals like *gairika*."¹





Śrī Girirāja-Govardhana

THE APPEARANCE OF ŚRĪ GOVĀRDHANA IN VRAJA

According to the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*, during the advent of Śrī Rāmacandra, monkeys and bears all brought large rocks and stones from many places to construct a bridge across the ocean. Hanumān also received the order from Śrī Rāmacandra to help build the bridge. Hanumān uprooted Govardhana from Uttarāñcala, but while carrying him to the ocean he heard a divine sound that announced, “The ocean bridge is now complete. No more rocks are required.”

Hearing this, Hanumān became some sad and put down Śrī Girirāja here, where he stands today. Girirāja also became unhappy and said to Hanumān, “You have deprived me of the touch of Śrī Rāma’s lotus feet. I will curse you.”

“Please forgive me,” Hanumān replied. “In the next Dvāpara-yuga, your desire will be fulfilled. At that time, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa will stop the worship of Indra and worship you instead. Angered, Indra will try to destroy Vraja by unleashing his thunderbolt and by sending torrential rains. At this time, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will hold you on His hand to protect Vraja. In this way He will fulfil your desire.” Upon saying this, Hanumān leapt into the air and arrived at Śrī Rāmacandra’s side by the aerial pathways.

After narrating the whole incident to Him, Śrī Rāmacandra said, “All the rocks that have been assembled to build the bridge have been delivered by the touch of My feet. But I shall fulfil the desires of Govardhana by holding him on My hand and touching him with My whole body. At the close of Dvāpara-yuga, I shall take birth in the dynasty of the Yadus and make Govardhana famous as the best servant of Hari by herding the cows with My *sakhās* on his slopes and by enjoying with My beloved *gopīs* in his *kuñjas*.”



Hanumān carrying Govardhana to Vraja

The *Garga-saṁhita* relates the following history of the appearance of Govardhana in Vraja in another age:

Once, in the course of his wanderings, Pulastya Ṛṣi reached Droṇācala Hill. The son of Droṇācala, Govardhana, was very beautiful, fragrant, smooth, and full of luxuriant, green trees and creepers. Pulastya Ṛṣi desired to bring this Govardhana to his place of residence, Kāśī, because there was no such hill there on which he could peacefully perform his *sādhana-bhajana*. He asked Droṇācala to give his son Govardhana to him for this purpose. Droṇācala could not refuse, as he feared being cursed. Govardhana agreed to go, on the condition that if Pulastya put him down somewhere along the way, he would remain there and not move again. The sage accepted his condition, and by mystic power kept Govardhana on his palm as he proceeded to Kāśī.

As they reached Vraja, thoughts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's future pastimes entered Govardhana's mind. Govardhana became so heavy that



Pulastya Ṛṣi bringing Govardhana to Vraja

the sage could no longer carry him and was forced to put him down right there. After the sage bathed, chanted his regular *mantras*, sung his prayers, ate and rested, he tried to lift Govardhana again, but remaining true to his word, Girirāja refused to move. With all his strength the sage tried to lift Govardhana, but could not do so. Finally, he angrily cursed Govardhana, saying, “You will diminish in size by one sesame seed daily.” Govardhana happily accepted this curse, because he knew about the coming descent of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. “Śyāmasundara will perform various pastimes on me, and I shall be blessed,” he thought.

Girirāja does, in fact, diminish in size every day, but who can say whether this is due to the sage’s curse or due to Girirāja’s feelings of separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa?

PASTIME PLACES ON THE GOVARDHANA PARIKRAMĀ

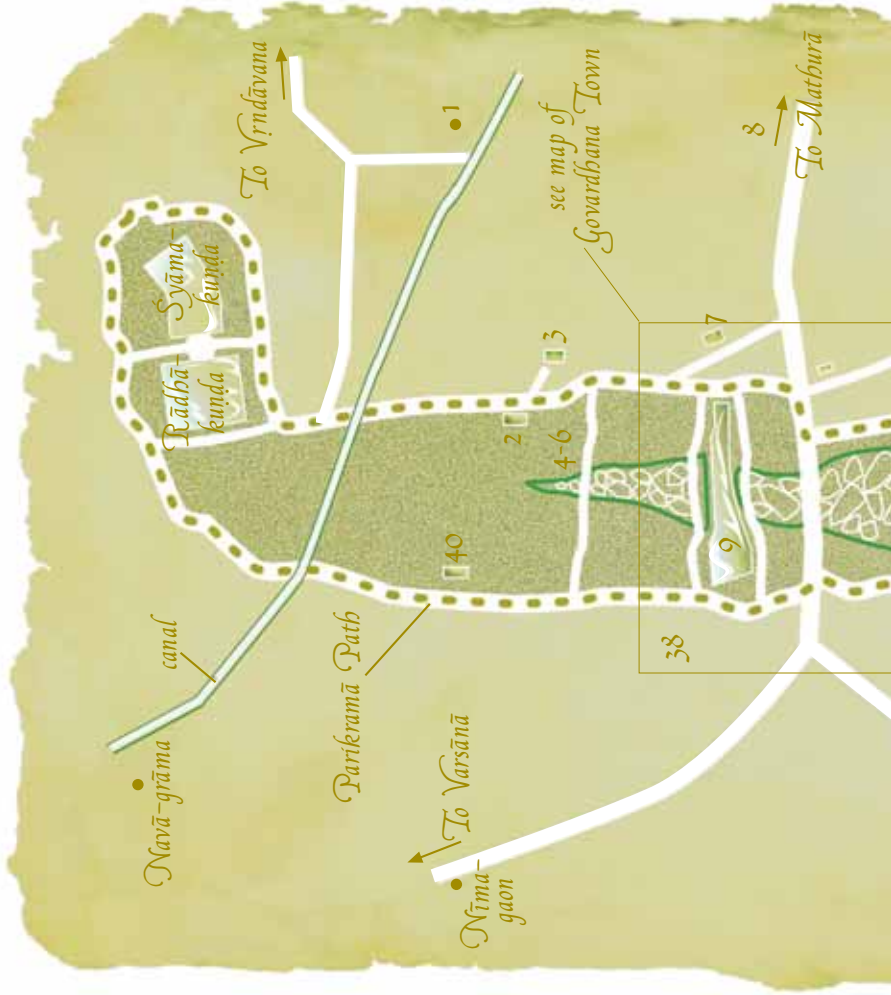
Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa are the two eyes of Girirāja Śrī Govardhana, and therefore the best part of his body. The prominent places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes mentioned below are in sequence as they appear on the *parikramā* of Girirāja, starting from Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śrī Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

(1) Mukharāī

The village of Mukharāī lies one mile south of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, along the road to Vṛndāvana. It is the home of old Mukharā, the maternal grandmother of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. When Yaśodā was a baby, Mukharā breast-fed her. With great pleasure, Grandmother Mukharā secretly arranged meetings between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the Youthful Couple. She is the mother-in-law of Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu and the mother of Kirtidā. The Vrajavāsīs used to

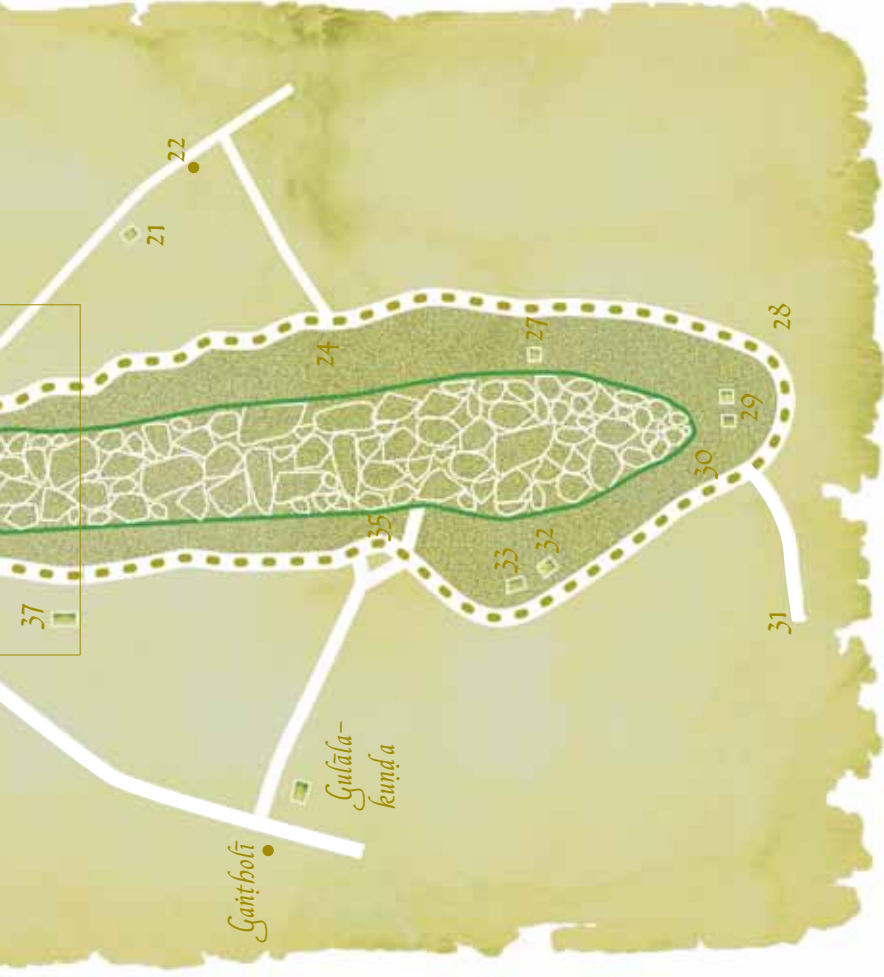


*The deities of Mukharā-devī (left),
Śrīmatī Rādhikā (center) and Kirtidā-devī (right)*



Govārdhana

1. Mukharāī
2. Kusuma-sarovara
3. Nārada-kuṇḍa
- 4-6. Ratna-simhāsana
Śyāma-kuṭī &
Gvāla-pokhara
7. Killola-kuṇḍa
8. Pālei
9. Mānast-gaṅgā
21. Pārāsaulī,
- Candra-sarovara
22. Paṭhā-grāma
24. Ānyora-gaon
27. Govinda-kuṇḍa
28. Pūñcharī
29. Apsarā-kuṇḍa &
Navala-kuṇḍa
30. Rāghava Paṇḍita's
Cave
31. Śyāma-ḍhāka
32. Surabhi-kuṇḍa



- 33. Airāvata-kunḍa
- 35. Jatipurā
- 37. Bilachū-kunḍa
- 38. Sakhi-sthali
- 40. Uddhava-kunḍa

The numbers on the map refer to the numbers in the book.

Govardhana Town

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 10. Harideva Temple | 16. Mukhāravinda |
| 11. Brahma-kuṇḍa | 18a. Ṛṇa-mocana-kuṇḍa |
| 12. Manasā-devī Temple | 18b. Pāpa-mocana-kuṇḍa |
| 14. Cakra Tīrtha &
Cakreśvara Mahādeva | 19. Dāna-ghāṭī |
| 15. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's
bhajana-kuṭī | 20. Dāna-nivartana-kuṇḍa |



address her with the name Baḍāī. With great eagerness, she would visit Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa every morning. There is a temple of Mukharā-devī here.

(2) Kusuma-sarovara

Kusuma-sarovara is on the right of the *parikramā* path, about one-and-a-half miles south-west of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa. A forest of flowers (*kusuma*) was here full of varieties of trees, creepers and flowers like *belī*, *camelī*, *jūhī*, *yūthī*, *mallikā* and *campaka*. Śrīmatī Rādhikā used to come here on the pretext of picking flowers with Her girlfriends, but Her real intent was to meet *rasika* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with whom She would have love-quarrels and sarcastic exchanges full of *rasa*.

Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta describes how one day Śrīmatī Rādhikā was picking flowers here with Her girlfriends when Kṛṣṇa arrived, and the following exchange took place:

Kṛṣṇa: Who is there?

Rādhā: Nobody.

Kṛṣṇa: Tell Me honestly, who are You?

Rādhā: Nobody.

Kṛṣṇa: You are speaking in a very crooked way.

Rādhā: And You speak in a very straight way, don't You?

Kṛṣṇa: I am asking You who You are.

Rādhā: Don't You know?

Kṛṣṇa: What are You doing?

Rādhā: Picking flowers to worship the Sungod.

Kṛṣṇa: Have You received permission from anyone to do so?

Rādhā: There is no need of anyone's permission.

Kṛṣṇa: Aha, I have caught a thief today. I wondered who was stealing flowers every day and ruining this garden. Now I have caught You, and will punish You straight away.

Rādhā: Since when have You become the master of this flower garden? Have You ever planted a single flower here?

Have You ever even watered one? On the contrary, You ruin this flower garden with Your hundreds and thousands of cows and Your boisterous, brazen friends. Indeed, since when have You become the protector of this garden?

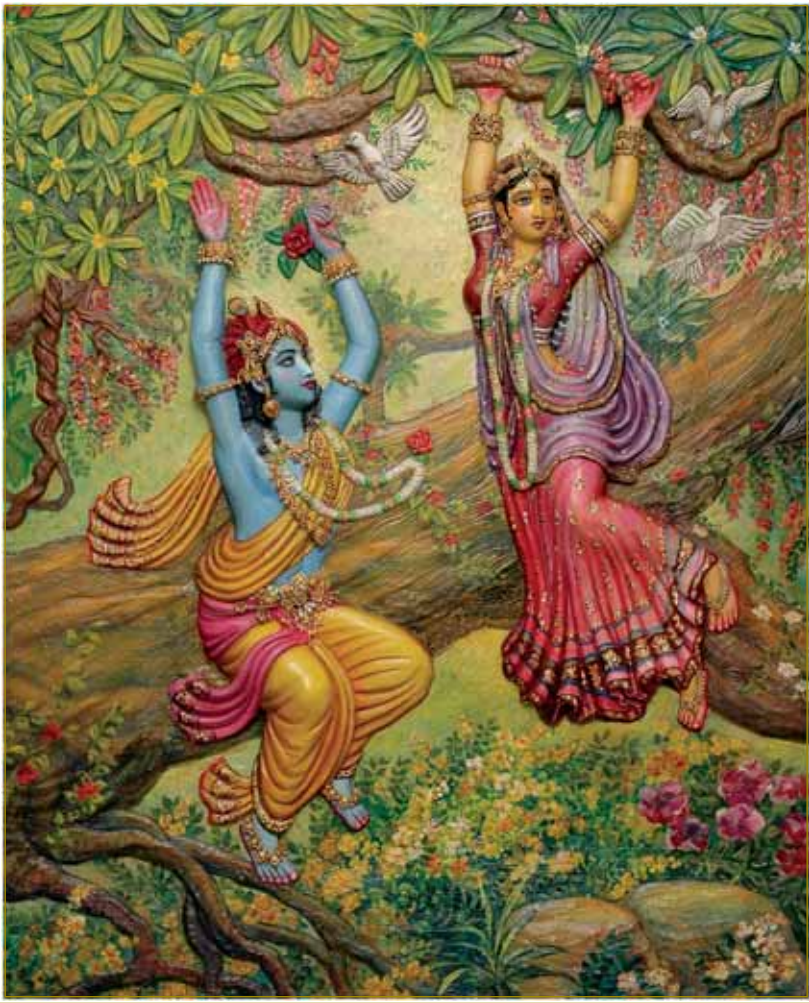
Kṛṣṇa: Do not defame a pious, righteous person like Me. Now I shall teach You a good lesson.

Rādhā (smiling): Aha-ha, You are a highly pious and righteous person, are You? You killed a woman right after Your birth; You lied to Your mother even in childhood; You stole butter from the houses of the neighbouring *gopīs*; and when You became a little older, You stole the clothes of the young *gopīs*. Only a few days ago You killed a calf. This is the extent of Your pious, saintly conduct.

Hearing the retort, Kṛṣṇa scratched His head and looked towards clever Madhumaṅgala, who advised Him, “One’s wellbeing lies in remaining quiet.” At this point, all the *sakhīs* surrounded Śyāmasundara and began to clap.



The following pastime also took place here. One morning, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs* came to the bank of Kusumasarovara to pick *belī*, *camelī*, *jūhī*, *kanera*, *campaka* and other flowers that bloomed here. Śrīmatī Rādhikā saw a tree with a branch full of flowers. Knowing that She was coming to Kusumasarovara to pick flowers, playful Kṛṣṇa had climbed that very tree. Using all His weight, He pushed the branch down and remained hidden in the foliage so that Śrīmatījī could not see Him. Rādhikā pulled down that branch with one hand, and was absorbed in picking its flowers with the other when suddenly Kṛṣṇa shifted to another branch. The branch sprung up, lifting up Rādhikā with it and She cried out for help. Śrī Kṛṣṇa leapt out from the tree and



caught hanging Śrīmatījī in His arms. The *sakhīs* began clapping and laughing loudly, but Śrīmatī Rādhikā, released Herself from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's embrace and scolded Him harshly.

Now the flower garden at Kusuma-sarovara has completely disappeared.



In 1767 AD, Mahārāja Javāhara Singh of Bharatapura looted the royal treasury of Delhi, and with that money built ornate stone *ghāṭas* with steps down to the water's edge. To the west of the *sarovara* is the cenotaph of Rājā Sūrajamala flanked by the cenotaphs of his two queens. There is a temple of Uddhavaji here.



Kusuma-sarovara

(3) Nārada-kuṇḍa

About four hundred metres south-east of Kusuma-sarovara is Nārada-kuṇḍa, where Śrī Nārada performed austerities. After Nārada heard the glories of *gopī-bhāva* (the exalted moods of the *gopīs*) from the mouth of Vṛndā-devī, the presiding deity of Vṛndāvana, an intense desire to lovingly serve the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as a *gopī* in Their most elevated amorous pastimes arose in his heart. He received the *gopāla-mantra* from Brahmā, the Grandsire of the world, and began to perform meditation and worship here in *rāga-mārga*, the path of spontaneous attachment, in the wake of the *gopīs*.

After doing this for a long time, Yogamāyā Paurṇamāsī dipped Nārada in Kusuma-sarovara, by which he received the form of a *gopī*. Thereafter, he received the *ekadāśa-bhāva* (eleven features that constitute one's true identity) in the path of spontaneous attachment and became qualified to serve the Divine Couple.

It is highly beneficial to visit Nārada-kuṇḍa.



Nārada-kuṇḍa



Śrī Nārada at Nārada-kuṇḍa

(4) Ratna-simbhāsana

Ratna-simbhāsana lies one mile south of Kusuma-sarovara on the Govardhana *parikramā* path coming from Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The following pastime took place here. One full moon day after Śiva-caturdaśī (Śiva-rātri), Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Balarāma and the *gopīs* were playing Holī, squirting each other with bright dye from long water syringes. The sweet music of drums, cymbals, *vīṇās* and other instruments filled the air with melodious *rāgas*, like the springtime *rāga*. Nearby, Śrīmatī Rādhikā sat upon a jewelled throne (*ratna-simbhāsana*). At that time, a follower of Kuvera named Śaṅkhacuḍa, who considered Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be an ordinary human being, tried to abduct these beautiful *gopīs*. With voices full of distress, the *gopīs* cried, “Rāma, Kṛṣṇa!” Kṛṣṇa ran to their call and killed Śaṅkhacuḍa. He took the jewel from the demon’s forehead and gave it to Śrī Balarāma, who sent it to Śrīmatī Rādhikā through Dhaniṣṭhā. This is the place where Rādhikā sat on the jewelled throne.



Kṛṣṇa’s footprint at Ratna-simbhāsana

(5) Śyāma-kuṭī

Śyāma-kuṭī is situated amidst a thick cluster of trees near Ratna-simhāsana. Here, Śrī Śyāmasundara smeared His body with śyāma-coloured musk, dressed Himself in śyāma-coloured clothes and ornaments, and entered a śyāma-coloured bower. Even the *gopīs* were unable to recognise Him. When they finally did, He performed many attractive pastimes with them. Nearby is a *bajanī-śīla*, a stone that makes sweet sounds when tapped.

(6) Gvāla-pokharā

Beautiful, thick trees and creepers surround this charming pastime place near Śyāma-kuṭī. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa herded the cows, He used to rest here at noon. The young cowherd boys (*gvāla-bālas*) lovingly served Him in the mellow of friendship (*sakhya-rasa*), and they all playfully snatched things from each other. These and other sweet pastimes have made this Bāla-pokharā (Gvāla-pokharā) famous.



Gvāla-pokharā

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

In the guise of a young priest, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, along with young Madhumaṅgala, performed Śrīmatī Rādhikā's worship of the Sungod at Sūrya-kuṇḍa. After completing the worship, they returned here and sat down with the cowherd boys. Madhumaṅgala was carrying *manohara-laddūs* and a golden ring that had been donated for their priestly services. He had carefully tied the *laddūs* in his cloth. Mischievous Balarāma asked Madhumaṅgala, "Friend Madhumaṅgala, what is in this bundle of yours?"

Madhumaṅgala hesitated. "Nothing," he answered. Baladeva gave a signal to the *sakhās*. Some of them caught Madhumaṅgala's hands, one covered Madhumaṅgala's eyes with his palms, and others forcibly snatched away his bundle. Laughing loudly, they shared the *laddūs* amongst themselves and ate them right in front of Madhumaṅgala. In the course of the tumult, Madhumaṅgala's cloth had loosened, which made him furious. He held out his sacred thread and was just about to curse Balarāma, Śrīdāma and the other *sakhās*, but Kṛṣṇa was somehow able to pacify him. Madhumaṅgala began to laugh and asked the *sakhās* for some left over *laddū* crumbs.

This Gvāla-pokharā still carries reminders of these pastimes. While performing *parikramā* of Girirāja-Govardhana, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu took rest here for a short time and remembered these pastimes.

(7) Killola-kuṇḍa

Killola-kuṇḍa lies south of Gvāla-pokharā towards Śrī Giridhārī Gauḍīya Maṭha. *Killola* means "sport" or "frolic". As its name suggests, this *kuṇḍa* is where the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa played in the water (*jal-keli*). Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* also frolicked and played here.

(8) Pāleī

The village of Pāleī lies one-and-a-half miles east of Nārada-kuṇḍa, near the Mathurā Road. The Yamunā used to flow here,



Killola-kunḍa

and even today Yamunā sand can be found by digging under the soil. At this place, Kṛṣṇa herded the cows with the *sakhās*, and had many kinds of amorous exchanges with the *sakhīs*. The poet Kumbhana dāsa also lived here. His style of poetry was called *aṣṭachāpa*. There is a well-known pond and *gośālā* here that are named after him.

(9) Mānasī-gaṅgā

Driven by the *gopīs*' insistence that He atone for the sin of killing a bull (Vṛṣabhāsura), Śrī Kṛṣṇa created Mānasī-gaṅgā from His mind and became pure by bathing in its waters.

According to a second story, once Śrī Nanda Mahārāja, Śrī Yaśodā and the other *gopas* and *gopīs* took Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with them on a journey to the Gaṅgā to take bath. That night, they

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rested near Govardhana. Kṛṣṇa questioned the need for them to travel so far when all holy places reside in Vraja. He remembered Gaṅgā-devī, and at once Bhagavatī Bhāgīrathī-Gaṅgā's strong current brought her to this spot, making a sweet sound. At the head of this current was Śrī Gaṅgā-devī, mounted on an alligator. This *darśana* astonished Nanda, Yaśodā, and the *gopas*, *gopīs* and other Vrajavāsīs.

Kṛṣṇa said, "All holy places exist in Vraja. You wanted to bathe in the Gaṅgā, so Gaṅgā-devī has personally appeared before you today. Please bathe in her waters without delay." Gaṅgā-devī appeared here on the dark night (Amāvasyā) of Kārtika on the day of Dīpāvalī. Large numbers of faithful people bathe here on Dīpāvalī and take *darśana* of Śrī Harideva. On all of Mānaśī-gaṅgā's banks and near Śrī Girirāja-Govardhana people offer ghee lamps.



Dīpāvalī

According to a third story, Kṛṣṇa used to sport in the Yamunā, sometimes with His *sakhās* and sometimes with His beloved *gopīs*. When Bhagavatī Gaṅgā beheld the great fortune of Yamunā, her younger sister, she also became overwhelmed by a strong desire to serve the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. She expressed this yearning to Yamunā and requested her help. Kṛṣṇa's dear Śrī Yamunā entreated her beloved Kṛṣṇa to bestow His mercy upon her elder sister, so when the time was right, Śrī Kṛṣṇa summoned Gaṅgājī to Vraja and blessed her by frolicking in her waters with the *gopīs*.

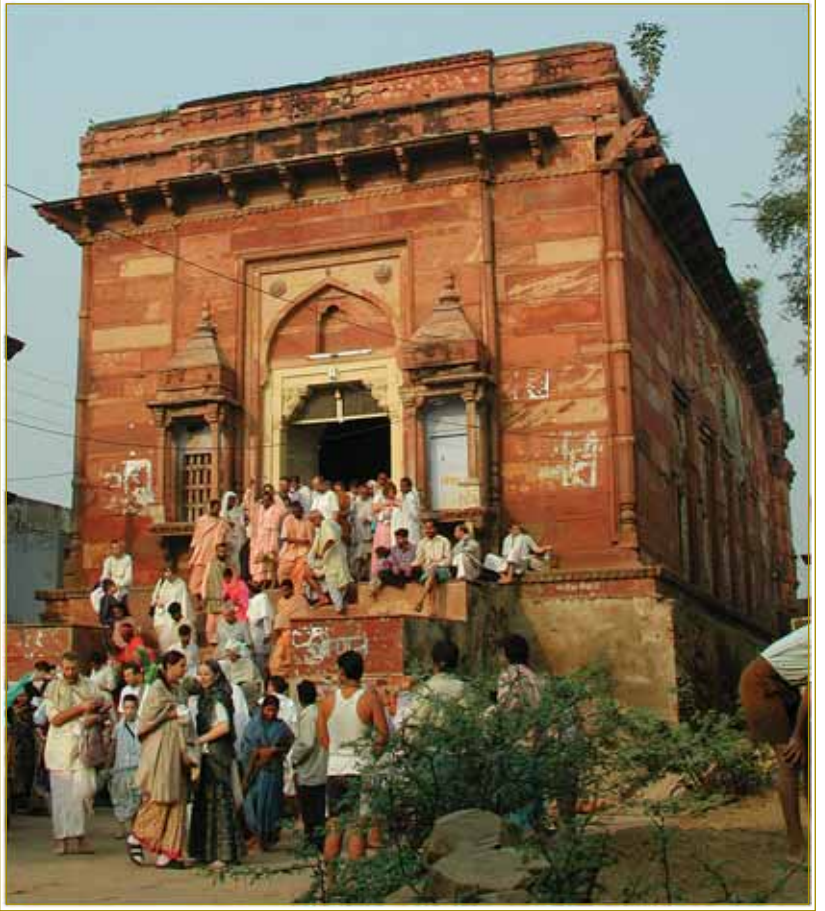
The stone *ghāṭas* at Mānasī-gaṅgā were built by King Bhagavān dāsa, the father of Māna Singh, a king of Jaipura.



Mānasī-gaṅgā

(10) Śrī Harideva

Śrī Harideva, the presiding deity of Girirāja-Govardhana, is present on the southern bank of Mānasī-gaṅgā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa took one form as Giridhārī (the lifter of Govardhana hill) and held His second form, Girirājajī, on His palm. The pastime of lifting Govardhana (*govardhana-dhāraṇa*) will be described later, when we come to Ānyora-gaon.



Śrī Harideva Temple



Śrī Harideva

(11) Brahma-kuṇḍa

Seeing that Kṛṣṇa was in a good mood, Brahmā came here seeking forgiveness for his offence of stealing the calves and cowherd boys. He performed *abhiṣeka* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and glorified Him with *mantras* from the *Sāma Veda*. The holy water from that *abhiṣeka* became Brahma-kuṇḍa, and Brahmāji bathed in it along with the other demigods.



Brahma-kuṇḍa

(12) Manasā-devī

The temple of Manasā-devī is situated on the southern bank of Mānasī-gaṅgā, above Brahma-kuṇḍa. Manasā-devī is none other than Yogamāyā-devī herself. One receives qualification to serve the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa only by the mercy of Yogamāyā-Paurṇamāsī. Some Vaiṣṇavas also address Mānasī-gaṅgā-devī simply as Manasā-devī.



Manasā-devī

(13) Go-ghāṭa

Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to bring the cows (*go*) and calves to this *ghāṭa* to drink water.

(14) Cakra-tīrtha

Cakra-tīrtha is on Mānasī-gaṅgā's north side. Cakreśvara Mahādeva, currently known as Cakaleśvara, resides here. When Indra inundated Vraja with torrential rains, Mahādeva (who is Sadaśiva, and therefore *viṣṇu-tattva*) served Girirāja and the Vrajavāsīs by raising his trident like a *cakra* and protecting them. (Some devotees declare that it was on Mahādeva's request that the Sudarśana *cakra* protected Girirāja-Govardhana and Vraja, and for this reason, Mahādeva became known as Cakreśvara Mahādeva.)



Cakalesvara Mahādeva

Cakreśvara presides on Pāraṅga-ghāṭa, and it is from here that the *gopīs* used to cross Mānasī-gaṅgā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa would act as a boatman and, while ferrying the *gopīs* across Bhagavatī Mānasī-gaṅgā, He would enjoy boating pastimes (*nauka-vilāsa*) and other pastimes with them. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has given a touching description of this boat-pastime in his prayer Śrī Govardhana-aṣṭakam (text 7):

*yatraiva gaṅgām anu nāvi rādhām
ārohya madhye tu nimagna-naukaḥ
kṛṣṇo hi rādhānugalo babhau sa
govardhano me diṣatām abhīṣtam*

“Śrīmatī Rādhikā sat in Kṛṣṇa’s boat in the middle of Mānasī-gaṅgā, while Kṛṣṇa, who was disguised as a boatman, tried to sink that boat. In Her fear, Rādhikā bound Śrī Kṛṣṇa in an embrace. May that Śrī Govardhana fulfil all my desires.”

(15) Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī’s bhajana-kuṭī

At Cakra-tīrtha, in front of the Cakaleśvara Mahādeva temple, is Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *bhajana-kuṭī*. Sanātana Gosvāmī occasionally resided here to perform *bhajana*, but because the mosquitoes here were a constant disturbance, he considered moving elsewhere. At that time, Cakaleśvara Mahādeva arrived there in the guise of a *brāhmaṇa*. “Bābājī, please do not move away. Stay here and freely perform your *bhajana*. From this day forth, mosquitoes will no longer trouble you.” Mosquitoes have not caused a disturbance here since. Sanātana Gosvāmī remained here for some time, and was able to perform his *bhajana* untroubled.

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī performed *parikramā* of Govardhana every day, even in his old age. Once, in the blazing heat of summer, the soil under his feet was burning hot. Weary and drenched with perspiration, Gosvāmījī sat down. No shady place was to be found. Suddenly, a cowherd boy came by and held a corner of His

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yellow shawl over Sanātana to give him shade. With the other corner, He fanned Gosvāmī's face. Sanātana Gosvāmī's whole body became cool and calm by the touch of that boy, who spoke in a very sweet voice, "Bābā, in this old age there is no need for you to perform *parikramā* of Govardhana and undergo so much hardship. I am giving you a *śilā* of Girirājajī that is marked with the staff and lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Circumambulate this *śilā* every day and you will receive the same benefit as doing Govardhana *parikramā*." Saying this, the boy gave the *śilā* to Sanātana Gosvāmī and disappeared. This boy was none other than Giridhārī, the lifter of Girirāja. This *śilā* used to reside in the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara in Vṛndāvana, but nowadays it is in the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara in Jaipura. The *pratibhū-vigraha*² of this *śilā* is present in the Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple in Vṛndāvana. The result of performing *parikramā* of Girirāja-Govardhana can easily be achieved by circumambulating the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara four times.



Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

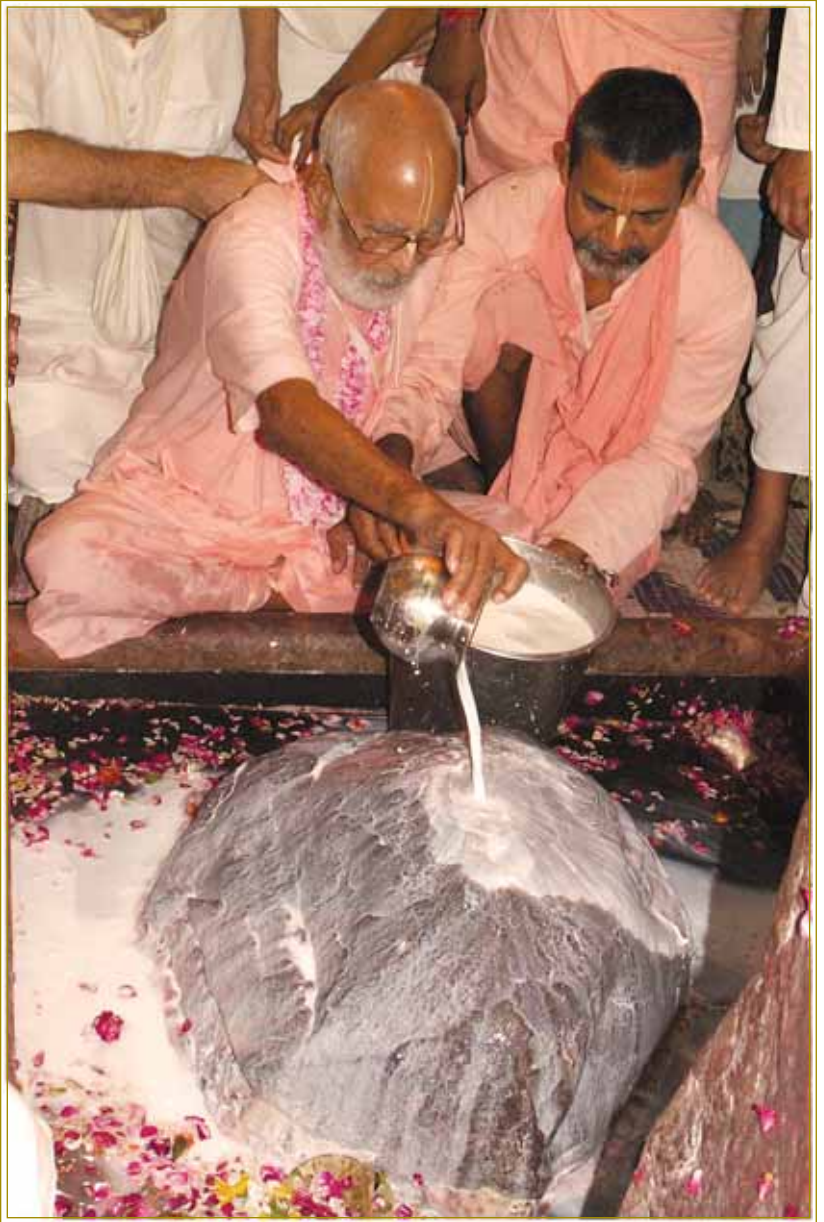
There is a temple of Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda Prabhu opposite Cakaleśvara. While performing *parikramā* of Govardhana, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and later Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had *darśana* of Śrī Cakaleśvara Mahādeva and Pāraṅga-ghāṭa at Mānasī-gaṅgā, and also took rest here.

(16) Mukhāravinda

On the northern bank of Mānasī-gaṅgā is the lotus face (*mukhāravinda*) of Śrī Govardhana. Govardhana's form is that of a sitting cow. His hind part is Pūcharī, or Pūñcharī. He has turned his neck to place his lotus face near his stomach, which is the town of Govardhana. His two eyes are Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa. There is a beautiful temple here with a *śilā* of Girirāja's lotus face. Every day he is given *abhiṣeka* and receives worship and offerings of *bhoga*. Festivals are also organised here on Annakūṭa and Dīpāvalī.



Mukhāravinda Temple



Mukhāravinda

(17) **Indradhvaja-vedī**

Indradhvaja-vedī is east of Govardhana. Previously, Indra was worshipped here, but Śrī Kṛṣṇa changed this custom and Govardhana was worshipped here instead.

(18) **Ṛṇa Mochana and Pāpa Mochana-kuṇḍa**

Ṛṇa Mochana and Pāpa Mochana-kuṇḍa were two *kuṇḍas* which used to lie south-east of Govardhana near Indradhvaja-vedī, nearby the present bus station. Today these *kuṇḍas* have disappeared. One *kuṇḍa* has been filled with dirt, and an electricity office has been built over it. Houses and shops have been built over the other *kuṇḍa*.

(19) **Dāna-ghāṭī**

Dāna-ghāṭī is situated in the middle of Govardhana on the present-day road between Mathurā and Kāmyavana. Even today, a toll must be paid to pass through here. At the time of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, Kṛṣṇa became a toll collector and performed *dāna-līlā*, or a toll pastime, with the *gopīs* through loving quarrels and sarcasm. This pastime has been beautifully described in *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*, *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi* and other books of the Gauḍīya *gosvāmīs*.

Once, on the bank of Govinda-kuṇḍa, Śrī Bhāgurī Ṛṣi was performing a sacrifice for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord. The cowherd boys and girls were bringing ingredients for the sacrifice from distant places. From the other side of Dāna-ghāṭī, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs* were also bringing yoghurt, milk, butter and various kinds of milk-sweets, such as *rabaḍī*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, along with Subala, Madhumaṅgala and other *sakhās*, obstructed their path and forcibly demanded toll-tax, and the *sakhās* and *gopīs* began to taunt each other.

Standing in His enchanting threefold-bending form, Śrī Kṛṣṇa mischievously asked the *gopīs*, "What are you carrying?"

"Milk, yoghurt and butter for Bhāgurī Ṛṣi's sacrifice," they replied.



Madhumaṅgala's mouth started to water upon the mere mention of butter. "Quickly pay the toll-tax and move on," he said.

"What toll-tax?" Lalitā angrily asked. "We have never paid any toll-tax before."

"You can pass only after paying toll-tax," Kṛṣṇa insisted.

"Since when have You become the toll collector here?" Śrīmatījī asked. "Did You inherit this place from Your father?"

"Don't be so insolent," He replied. "I am Vṛndāvaneśvara, the ruler of the kingdom of Vṛndāvana."

"How is that?"

"Vṛndā is My wedded wife," Kṛṣṇa asserted. "The property of the wife is also the property of the husband. Vṛndāvana is the kingdom of Vṛndā-devī, and therefore it is My kingdom."

"Really?" Lalitā answered haughtily. "We have never heard anything about this. Let us ask Vṛndā right now." She turned to Vṛndā. "Vṛndā, is this 'black one' your husband?"

"Never!" Vṛndā flared in disgust. "I have no relation with this lying debauchee. Previously this was my kingdom, but I have given it to Vṛndāvaneśvarī Śrīmatī Rādhikā." All the *sakhīs* burst into laughter, which slightly embarrassed Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Nonetheless, He was determined to collect the toll-tax. After this love-quarrel the *gopīs*



Dāna-ghāṭī

exchanged the toll-tax of *prema* at *Dāna-nivartana-kuṇḍa*, some distance from *Dāna-ghāṭī*. To find out more about this pastime, you can read *Dāna-kelī-kaumudī* and *Dāna-kelī-cintāmaṇi*.

(20) *Dāna-nivartana-kuṇḍa*

The *gopīs* reclaimed their toll-tax from *Kṛṣṇa* at this place.



Dāna-nivartana-kuṇḍa

(21) Pārāsaulī

Pārāsaulī village lies about one-and-a-quarter miles south-east of Govardhana Town in the lowlands of Govardhana. During the Mughal reign, the Muslims changed the name of the village to Mahammadpura. This is the place of the spring *rāsa-līlā* of Kṛṣṇa and His beloved *gopīs*. This *rāsa* continued for an entire night of Brahmā, but it seemed to be over in a few short moments. The moon in the sky had become stunned upon seeing this *rāsa-līlā*, and remained in the one place for the duration of the entire night. Because this *rāsa-līlā* took place in the light of a brilliant full moon, this place is also called Candra-sarovara, “the lake of the moon”. In the south-western corner of the *sarovara* is the Śṛṅgāra Temple, where Kṛṣṇa personally decorated Śrīmatījī.

Near the *sarovara* under a *choṅkara* tree is the sitting-place of Śrī Vallabhācārya. The *kuṭī* and *samādhi* of Sūradāsa, known simply as Sūra-kuṭī and Sūra-samādhi, are also in this area.



Candra-sarovara

Sūradāsa was a natural poet. His collection of poems is famous as *Sūra-sāgara* or *Sūra-padāvalī*. Although he was blind, he would compose poems that beautifully described the different outfits and decorations of Śrī Nāthajī. One day, the priest did not dress Śrī Nāthajī, and left Him completely naked. He opened the doors of the altar and asked Sūradāsa to describe Śrī Nāthajī's decorations. Sūradāsa remained silent for a few moments, but the priest insisted. Sūradāsa laughed loudly and proceeded to sing, "Āj bhaye hari naṅgam naṅgā – today, Hari is undressed and naked." All present were stunned to hear this.

Sūradāsa spent his last days in Pārāsaulī. One day, Śrī Viṭṭhalācārya, the son of Śrī Vallabhācārya, asked him, "Sūra, what are you thinking about?" Sūradāsa then composed his last song: "*Khañjan nain rūp ras māte, atiśay cārū caṭal aniyāre ṭal piñjarā na samāte* – Kṛṣṇa's beautiful eyes are like *khañjana* birds. They are full of *rasa*, very restless, and slightly reddened due to intoxication. My life can no longer remain engaged in this body." Saying this, he left his body. With tear-filled eyes, Śrī Viṭṭhalācārya said, "The boat of *puṣṭi-mārga*³ has departed today."

In the south-eastern part of Pārāsaulī is Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa, on whose bank is a temple of Śrī Baladeva.

(22) Paiṭhā-grāma

The village of Paiṭhā is situated two miles south of Pārāsaulī. This place has special significance for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the springtime *rāsa*, the grief-stricken *gopīs* began searching for Him everywhere. Kṛṣṇa assumed a four-armed form at this place, but when the *gopīs* saw this form, they simply offered obeisances and continued on their way. Śrīmatījī, restless in separation from Kṛṣṇa, finally arrived there. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw Śrīmatījī He was unable to maintain His four-armed form, and two arms entered His body (*paiṭha gaye*). He then met with Śrīmatījī in His form as an ever-fresh, youthful cowherd boy



Pañbhā-grāma

and expert dancer holding a flute in His hand. Śrī Kṛṣṇa begged forgiveness from Her and said, “Beloved, when I suddenly did not see You in the *rāsa*, I became aggrieved in separation from You and began searching for You. I am only performing this *rāsa* for You. You should never go into jealous anger (*māna*) and leave Me ever again.”

Thus, the springtime *rāsa* is unique, in that it establishes Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s superiority over the other *gopīs*. The poet Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī has described this springtime *rāsa* in his *Gīta-govinda*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu cites this spring *rāsa* alone as proof of Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s pre-eminence. This subject has been described very sweetly in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in the conversation between Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda and Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Kṛṣṇa has many beloveds, but Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the crown jewel of them all, because She is the embodiment of *mahābhāva* and the possessor of

all good qualities. This is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa was able to maintain His four-armed form before the other *sakhīs*, but could not maintain His mood upon seeing Śrīmatījī and His two extra arms entered into His body. This is the special glory of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Among the places of *darśana* in Paiṭha are Nārāyaṇa-sarovara, Aiṁṭhā-kadamba, Khīra-sāgara and Balabhadra-kuṇḍa.

(23) Bacha-gaon

Bacha-gaon is three miles south of Paiṭha, and is also called Vatsavana. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* sometimes herded the calves here. Kanaka-sāgara, Sahasra-kuṇḍa, Rāma-kuṇḍa, Aḍvāro-kuṇḍa, Rāvāri-kuṇḍa, and the temples of Mākkhana-chora Ṭhākura and Vatsa-bihāri Ṭhākura are also here.

Lord Brahmā stole the cowherd boys and calves in order to further behold Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweet pastimes. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself took the forms of all the cowherd boys, as well as the forms of their sticks, flutes, horns, calves and so forth; and for one year He went cow grazing and performed the pastimes they had all previously enjoyed.

One or two days before a full year had elapsed, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the cowherd boys were grazing the calves here. The adult *gopas* were grazing the cows nearby on Govardhana Hill, and their newborn calves were with them. When the cows saw their older offspring with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, they ran towards them, bellowing loudly, without caring for the thorns, sharp grass and ditches on the way. The adult *gopas* tried their level best to obstruct them by using their sticks, but to no avail. The cows did not even care for their newborn calves. When they met their older calves at this place, they began to lick them lovingly. The older *gopas* became angry that they could not restrain the cows, and thought that their children had sounded their flutes and horns to attract them. Intent on punishing their children, they went there quickly; but as soon as they arrived, their anger completely vanished and they embraced their children instead.

Śrī Baladeva was amazed to see this and wondered, “Why did the cows leave their younger calves today and show more affection to their older ones? They used to love their younger calves the most, and had even more love for My brother Kṛṣṇa. And the mothers of the cowherd boys used to love Kṛṣṇa more than their own sons, but now they love them both equally.” Baladeva sought the answer to this riddle through His transcendental vision. Smiling, He then turned to Kṛṣṇa and said, “Brother, was the milk of one mother not enough to fill Your belly? Did You have to become the children of hundreds and thousands of mothers so that You could drink their milk too? But even this did not satisfy You, so You assumed the form of all these calves and drank the milk of millions of cows. What is the secret behind this pastime of Yours?” Kṛṣṇa revealed the entire mystery to Baladeva. Thus, because this forest is where Kṛṣṇa revealed Himself to be all the calves (the Hindi word for “calf” is *bachḍa*), it is called Bachavana.

(24) Ānyora-gaon

Ānyora village lies on the *parikramā* path two miles south of the town of Govardhana. The village of Jatipurā, or Gopālapurā, lies to the west of Ānyora, on the other side of Govardhana Hill. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*⁴ describes how on the advice of Kṛṣṇa, Nanda Bābā and the other Vrajavāsīs began worshipping Girirāja instead of Indra. It also describes how they performed the Annakūṣa festival for Girirāja here. They cooked many delicacies in their homes, filled hundreds of carts with milk, yoghurt, *rabaḍī* and other kinds of preparations, and presented them before Girirāja. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself offered everything to Girirāja and at the same time assumed a huge four-armed form, with which He devoured all the offerings by extending His long arms. Begging for more to eat, He called out in great happiness, “*Āno re, āno re!* – Bring more, bring more!” Kṛṣṇa folded His hands and said, “We are poor Vrajavāsīs. Whatever we have, we have presented before You. Please be satisfied with this.” In His four-armed form, Girirāja drank the water of

Mānasī-gaṅgā, Kusuma-sarovara and other ponds, and exclaimed, “*Tr̥pto ’smi, tr̥pto ’smi!* – I am satisfied, I am satisfied!” and wiped His hands and mouth with His cloth. He told the Vrajavāsīs to ask for a boon, and they simply requested this: “May this *lālā* of ours, this darling Kṛṣṇa, always remain happy and live long.” When that four-armed form disappeared, Kṛṣṇa asked the Vrajavāsīs, “Did you ever receive *darśana* of Indradeva? Girirāja is very kind. He fulfils everyone’s desires.” After worshipping Govardhana, the Vrajavāsīs considered their lives fully blessed.

This place has been named Ānyora-grāma because it is here that Girirāja called out “*Āno re, āno re!*” The natural impressions of the Vrajavāsīs’ bowls in the rocks of Girirāja can be found where the Annakūṭa was performed. Nearby is a *bajani-sīlā*, a stone which emits a sweet sound when tapped with a piece of rock, or with a stick or a finger.



Annakūṭa



Bajani-silā

(25) The place of Śrī Nāthajī's appearance

This place is situated near the *bajani-silā*. Once, in his wanderings, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī came to Vraja. He is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's grand spiritual master and Śrī Īśvara Purī's spiritual master. *Vraja-prema* is difficult to obtain even for Brahmā and other demigods, but it has been distributed freely in the world by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Mādhavendra Purīpāda is the seed or sprout of that *prema-kalpataru*, or desire-tree that bestows divine transcendental love. He was a renunciant who followed *ayācaka-vṛtti*, which means he never begged food from anyone. One day, he was performing *bhajana* near Govinda-kuṇḍa in a secluded place surrounded by lush, green trees and creepers. For two or three days, he was so absorbed in his *bhajana* that he was even unconscious of his own body. On the third day, at midday, a cowherd boy whose complexion was darkish blue (*śyāma*) arrived there, carrying a pot of milk in his hand. The boy said, "Bābā, nobody remains hungry in Vraja. My mother saw you as she passed by, carrying water from the well. She understood that you are hungry and thirsty, so she has sent this milk for you. I am going now to herd the cows. When I return, I will collect the pot." Saying this, the boy quickly left.

Purījī pondered the sweet talk, pleasant behaviour and beauty of that boy. "In my whole life, I have never seen such a beautiful boy," he thought. He completed his *bhajana*, offered the milk to his worshipful deity and then drank it. The unequalled taste and fragrance of the milk made Purījī ecstatic. He became overwhelmed with love of God, but could apply no concentration to his *bhajana*. With tear-filled eyes, he began waiting for that *śyāma*-complexioned boy to return. Night fell but the boy did not come. During early hours of the morning he dozed off a little and saw that boy return. "I am Gopāla, the son of Vrajarāja Nanda," He said. "My other name is Śrī Nāthajī. Mahārāja Vajranābha installed Me near here on the top of Girirāja. Long ago, in fear of the barbarians, the priests taking care of Me hid Me under the earth in a nearby valley of Govardhana. I have been thirsty and



Śrī Nāthajī at Govinda-kuṇḍa



The appearance place of Śrī Nāthajī

hungry for many days and am feeling so hot. I have been waiting for you for a long time, thinking, ‘When will Mādhavendra take Me from here and serve Me?’” Saying this, the boy indicated His hiding place and disappeared.

In the morning, when Purījī narrated this incident to the villagers, they dug at the place specified in the dream and found Gopālajī. This made Purī Gosvāmī and the Vrajavāsīs jubilant. An altar was built on top of the hill by erecting three vertical stones in three directions and placing a horizontal slab across them. Gopālajī was seated on that throne and for many days He received a splendid bathing ceremony with abundant milk, yoghurt, clarified butter, sugar and honey. The Vrajavāsīs offered *annakūṭa*, which means an offering of mounds of grains like *dāl* and rice, and *kaḍhī*, *pūrī*, *kacaudī* and many other delicious

preparations. The neighbouring people, especially the wealthy merchants of Mathurā, participated in the festival by body, mind and wealth. After serving Gopālajī like this for some time, Mādhavendra Purī, on the order of Śrī Nāthajī, turned over the responsibility of the worship to his disciples and went to Jagannātha Purī to procure *malayana-candana*, or sandalwood from the Malaya Hills, for Him.

This village is currently named Jatīpurā after him, as the word *jatī* (or *yatī*) means renunciant. This incident has been described vividly in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.⁵ Nowadays, Śrī Nāthajī presides in Śrī Nāthadvāra in Rājasthāna.

Due to the atrocities of the fanatic Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, the king of Jaipura brought the deities of Vṛndāvana, such as Śrī Govinda, Śrī Gopīnātha and Śrī Madana-mohana, to his kingdom in Rājasthāna.

(26) Gaurī-tīrtha

A little further east of Ānyora-grāma is Gaurī-kuṇḍa. This attractive place is full of *kadamba* trees amidst luxuriant, green bowers. It is where the secret pastimes of Candrāvalī and Kṛṣṇa took place. The play, *Vidagdha-mādhava*, gives a very sweet and beautiful description of this.

Candrāvalī is the daughter of Candrabhānu Gopa, the elder brother of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja. In regard to her beauty, qualities, charm, cleverness and so forth, she is the topmost *gopī* of the party that is opposed to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Padmā and Śaibyā are her principal *sakhīs*. On the pretext of worshipping goddess Gaurī with her *sakhīs*, Candrāvalī used to meet Kṛṣṇa at this appointed place, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa would perform some pastimes with her for a while. Sometimes, Rūpa and Rati Mañjarīs of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's party would use clever tricks to take Śrī Kṛṣṇa from here to meet with Śrīmatī Rādhikā at Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Once, while performing pastimes with Candrāvalī, Kṛṣṇa became confused and inadvertently asked her, “Rādhā, are you all



Gaurī-kunḍa

right?” Hearing Rādhā’s name, Candrāvalī became irritated and replied, “Mahārāja Kāmsa, are You all right?”

Puzzled, Kṛṣṇa asked, “*Sakhī*, where is Kāmsa here?”

“Where is Your Rādhā here?” was Candrāvalī’s reply.

Kṛṣṇa understood His mistake and, feeling very ashamed, begged Candrāvalī’s forgiveness.

(27) Govinda-kunḍa

When Indra saw that the Vrajavāsīs had stopped worshipping him and were worshipping Govardhana instead, he became angry. Consequently, with the intention of destroying them, he poured forth torrential rains and hurled thunderbolts upon them for seven days, but he was not successful. Finally, Lord Brahmā advised him to ask for forgiveness for his offence, and so Indra performed *abhiṣeka* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the milk of Surabhīdevī at this place. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was named “Govinda” because He nourishes and gives pleasure to all – the cows, *gopas*, *gopīs* and to the land of Vraja. This place is known as Govinda-kunḍa because



the name-giving ceremony and *abhiṣeka* of Śrī Govinda were performed here. Śrī Vajranābha established this *kuṇḍa* in memory of this pastime.



Govinda-kunda

(28) Pūñcharī

Pūñcharī marks the southern border of Govardhana. We have previously said that Govardhana's form resembles a cow, but it can also be likened to a peacock. This part, Pūñcharī, is raised high like the peacock's tail (*pūñcha*). *Parikramā* of Govardhana's eastern side is completed here, and from here *parikramā* of the western side begins. Apsarā-kuṇḍa and Navala-kuṇḍa are situated here.

(29) Apsarā-kuṇḍa and Navala-kuṇḍa

Apsarā-kuṇḍa and Navala-kuṇḍa lie near each other. Śrīmatī Rādhikā is likened to the most beautiful *apsarā*, a damsel from the heavenly planets. Apsarā-kuṇḍa received its name after Her, and the eternally youthful (*navala*) Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa is present here as Navala-kuṇḍa. Nearby is a place of *rāsa*. Previously this was a delightful and enchanting grove of thousands of *kadamba* and *tamāla* trees. Today hardly any of these trees remain. The Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa melted in *prema* while performing the *rāsa* dance here. Apsarā-kuṇḍa and Navala-kuṇḍa are Their melted forms. Fortunate *sādhakas* obtain *darśana* of these ponds.



Pūñcharī



Apsarā-kunḍa



Navala-kunḍa

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

(30) Rāghava Paṇḍita's cave

Adjacent to this place of *rāsa* is a cave in a secluded place where an associate of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Śrīla Rāghava Paṇḍita, used to perform his *bhajana*. He was a highly realised soul and *rasika* Vaiṣṇava. It is mentioned in *Bhakti-ratnākara* that Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī arranged for Śrīnivāsa Ācārya and Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura to perform *parikramā* of Vraja-manḍala with Rāghava Paṇḍita. Near this cave, on top of Govardhana Hill, is an imprint of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's crown.

(31) Śyāma-dhāka

This pastime place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is situated one mile west of Pūñcharī and is filled with lush, green *palāśa* trees. Next to it is a very large grove of *kadamba* trees, with leaves like cups. Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to drink buttermilk from these leaf-cups along with His friends. This is also a place of *rāsa*.



Śyāma-dhāka

(32) Surabhi-kuṇḍa

Surabhi-kuṇḍa is filled with clean, sweet water. It lies on the right-hand side of the *parikramā* path, somewhat further along than Rāghava Paṇḍita's cave. On Indra's request, Surabhī bathed Śrī Govinda at Govinda-kuṇḍa with the milk from her udder. Later, out of a strong desire to have *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's cow herding pastimes, and especially of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's confidential pastimes in the *nikuñjas*, Surabhī dwelt here for the duration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes in Vraja. Mahārāja Vajranābha established this Surabhi-kuṇḍa in her memory. By bathing and performing *ācamana* here, all one's sins, offences and unwanted desires (*anarthas*) are dispelled and one obtains *vraja-prema*.



Surabhi-kuṇḍa

(33) Airāvata-kuṇḍa

On the order of Indra, his elephant carrier Airāvata used his trunk to bathe Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the water of the heavenly Gaṅgā. Near the *kuṇḍa* on top of the hill are the impressions of Airāvata's feet.

(34) Rudra-kuṇḍa

Rudra-kuṇḍa is situated north-west of Airāvata-kuṇḍa, and is also called Rudana-kuṇḍa. Here Mahādeva (Śivaji) became so absorbed in meditation on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes that he began to weep (*rudana karnā*). Nearby is the place where Kṛṣṇa used to play ball. In this area, one can also take *darśana* of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's sitting-place, *jāna-ajāna* trees and a *pūjani-silā*. A third name of the *kuṇḍa* is Haraji-kuṇḍa.



Airāvata-kuṇḍa



Rudra-kunḍa

(35) Jatīpurā

Jatīpurā is where Śrī Mādhavendra Purī lived and performed *bhajana*. When the deity of Śrī Nāthajī manifested Himself, He was placed on top of Govardhana Hill. Mādhavendra Purī performed the *abhiṣeka* and *annakūṭa* festival of Śrī Nāthajī here. After entrusting the worship and service of Śrī Nāthajī to his disciples, Mādhavendra Purī then went to Purī-dhāma on the order of Śrī Nāthajī, to bring sandalwood and camphor. When he arrived at Remunā, the deity of Gopīnāthajī stole a pot of sweet-rice for him to taste. For this reason Gopīnātha is called Khīra-corā Gopīnātha, thief (*cora*) of the sweet-rice (*khīra*). When Mādhavendra Purī was returning from Jagannātha Purī with sandalwood and camphor, he received an order from Śrī Nāthajī of Govardhana in a dream. Śrī Nāthajī told him that by grinding the sandalwood and camphor, and smearing it on the body of Khīra-corā Gopīnātha every day for one month, His own body would become cool. It is not known whether Mādhavendra Purī returned to Govardhana or not. His *samādhi* lies in Remunā near the temple of Khīra-corā Gopīnātha.

The six Gosvāmīs, especially Śrī Rūpa, Sanātana and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmīs, had very good relations with Śrī Viṭṭhalācārya, the son of Śrī Vallabhācārya. Śrī Viṭṭhalācārya had an affectionate and friendly relationship with Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, who Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs regarded as a younger brother. They therefore regarded Śrī Viṭṭhalācārya as a younger brother and loved him dearly. The six Gosvāmīs, who are the topmost *niṣkiñcanas*⁶, remained absorbed in *bhāva-sevā*, meditation on the daily eight-fold pastimes (*aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*) of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala, by means of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. Therefore, they entrusted the responsibility of Śrī Nāthajī's worship to the sons of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

Our Gosvāmīs considered Śrī Girirāja-Govardhana to be Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, and never used to climb on him to take *darśana* of Śrī Nāthajī. Whenever the Gosvāmīs had a fervent desire to see Him, Śrī Nāthajī would Himself descend on some pretext or other to bestow His *darśana*, sometimes coming to Gāṅṭholī-grāma and sometimes to Sata-ghaḍā in Mathurā. This is mentioned in Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Bhakti-ratnākara*. Śrīman Mahāprabhu did not climb upon Govardhana either, and had *darśana* of Śrī Nāthajī in Gāṅṭholī-grāma.⁷

(36) Annakūṭa-sthalī

The place adjacent to Govardhana in Jatīpurā is called Annakūṭa-sthalī. Mādhavendra Purī held the grand Annakūṭa festival at this place for one month. Even now, Annakūṭa festivals are held here on special occasions, and each day of the year thousands of pilgrims bathe Girirāja with many litres of milk.

(37) Bilachū-kuṇḍa

Bilachū-kuṇḍa is also called Vilāsa-vadana, and is a place of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes (*vilāsa*).

(38) Sakhī-sthalī (Kadamba-khaṇḍī)

Further on from Bilachū-kuṇḍa, after crossing Dāna-ghāṭī, the pilgrim enters the town of Govardhana, and again performs *parikramā* of Mānasī-gaṅgā and Cakreśvara. North-west of Mānasī-gaṅgā is Sakhī-sthalī, the place of Candrāvalī Sakhī. This village is now known as Sakhītharā, and lies within Sakhīvana.

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī used to perform *bhajana* on the bank of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. He would remain absorbed in *bhajana* day and night, and for his daily sustenance, he would only drink a little buttermilk in a tiny cup made of *kadamba* leaves. One day, a Vrajavāsī brought some buttermilk in a larger *kadamba*-leaf cup. Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī asked him where he had procured it from, and the Vrajavāsī joyfully responded, “I brought it from Sakhī-sthalī.” At that time, Dāsa Gosvāmī was not in external consciousness, and was irritated by the very mention of Sakhī-sthalī. He angrily ordered the Vrajavāsī to leave. The Vrajavāsī could not understand Dāsa Gosvāmī’s mood and fled. Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī is an intimate maidservant in Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s own group (*svapakṣa*). An ordinary person cannot comprehend his deep mood and actions.

(39) Saun̄karāī

The present name of this village is Śakravā, and is situated two miles west of Govardhana and one-and-a-half miles north-west of Sakhītharā. At this place, Rādhikā’s own *gopīs* made Kṛṣṇa repeatedly swear that He knew no one other than Śrī Rādhikā. Hence, this place is called Saun̄karāī, from *śapatha lenā*, meaning “to take an oath”. This is also where Indra donated a Surabhī cow to Kṛṣṇa. Śakra-kuṇḍa and Gvāla-kuṇḍa lie here.

(40) Uddhava-kuṇḍa

Uddhava-kuṇḍa is situated exactly west of Kusuma-sarovara on the right side of the *parikramā* path. Vajranābha Mahārāja manifested Uddhava-kuṇḍa under the guidance of Śāṇḍilya and



Uddhava-kuṇḍa

other sages. Uddhavajī always resides nearby here as grass and shrubs in order to be sprinkled by the foot-dust of the *gopīs*. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Māhātmya* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* gives an interesting description of this place.

After the disappearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, His queens in Dvārakā were greatly afflicted by sorrow. Once, Vajranābha came here with them and they loudly performed *saṅkīrtana*. In that great *saṅkīrtana*, all the associates of Kṛṣṇa started to appear one by one. The associates of Dvāraka all sang and danced, and Arjuna began to dance and play *mṛdaṅga*. Suddenly, that exalted soul, Śrī Uddhava emerged from the grass and shrubs, and he also became immersed in dancing in that *mahā-saṅkīrtana*. How could Kṛṣṇa not come there? Finally, He also appeared in that *mahā-saṅkīrtana-rāsa*, along with Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the other *sakhīs* and, after some time, disappeared again. In this way, Uddhava pacified the queens at this place.

Pilgrims performing *parikramā* of Śrī Govardhana proceed along the *parikramā* path till they arrive at Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The *parikramā* and pastime places in the vicinity of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa have already been described in the chapter on Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

PASTIME PLACES VISITED AFTER PARIKRAMĀ OF GOVARDHANA

After completing *parikramā* of Girirāja-Govardhana, pilgrims performing *parikramā* of Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala proceed from the town of Govardhana or from Jatīpurā towards Nīma-gaon.

Nīma-gaon

Nīma-gaon was originally called Nirmañchana-gaon. Here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mother and grandmother and the local *gopīs* worshipped (*nirmañchana*) Kṛṣṇa and kissed His face. Kṛṣṇa is more dear to these *gopīs* than their own sons and even their own life. This village is situated on the Govardhana–Varsānā highway, two miles west of Govardhana, and is where Śrī Nimbārkācārya performed *bhajana*. A temple of the Nimbarka *sampradāya* lies here, as well as a *kuṇḍa*. This is also a place of *bhajana* for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.

Pāṭala-grāma

Pāṭala-grāma is two miles north of Nīma-gaon. Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *sakhīs* used to pick *pāṭala* flowers, or roses, here; hence, this village became known as Pāṭala-grāma. Its present name is Pāḍara.

Ḍerāvalī

While moving to Nandagaon, Śrī Nanda Mahārāja camped (*derā dālā*) here upon arriving from Chaṭṭīkarā. This village is therefore known as Ḍerāvalī.

Navā-grāma

The pastime place of Navā-grāma lies south-west of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Its present name is Kuñjerā. This is the boundary of the *kuñjas* of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Navā-grāma is called Kuñjerā because of the *kuñjas* within it. Here, the *gopīs* arranged themselves in

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

the form of an elephant (*kuñjara*), and Kṛṣṇa climbed upon them. This place is also known as Kuñjerā on account of this playful event.

Sūrya-kuṇḍa (Choṭā Bharanā)

Sūrya-kuṇḍa is about four miles north of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Śrīmatī Rādhikā used to come here with Her *sakhīs*, especially on Sundays, on the pretext of performing worship of Mitradeva, or Sūryadeva (the Sungod). Śrī Kṛṣṇa also came here disguised as a priest, along with Madhumaṅgala, to perform the worship of Mitradeva with great merriment. *Mitra*, or “friend”, has two meanings: it refers to the Sungod and also to the best of friends, *prāna-sakhā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. (Jaṭilā understood *mitra* to mean the Sungod only. She could not comprehend the loving emotions of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala.)



Sūrya-kuṇḍa



Sūryadeva

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This pastime is performed at midday, or in the third *prahara* of the day, after which Śrīmatījī returns to Jāvaṭa along with Her friends and mother-in-law Jaṭilā. Kṛṣṇa and Madhumaṅgala also return from here to the company of the *sakhās* in the valley of Govardhana. Kṛṣṇa's friends would run to meet Him, as if He had been gone for only a moment and was just returning from some nearby place.

The *kuñja* where the pastime of Sūrya-pūjā took place is next to Sūrya-kuṇḍa. Since it is a place of loving enjoyment for Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala, it is also called Madana-raṇa-vāṭikā. There is also a beautiful temple of Sūryadeva here. Today, Sūrya-kuṇḍa is also called Choṭā Bharanā.

Śrī Madhusūdana Bābājī, who was a self-realised soul and a *rasika* Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava, used to perform *bhajana* on the west bank of this pond. Vaiṣṇavas used to come to him from distant places to receive instruction on *bhajana*. The famous *vaiṣṇava sarvabhauma* Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja was a disciple of this great soul. He also performed *bhajana* here for a long time, before moving to Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma. His *bhajana-kuṭī* and *samādhi* are in Śrī Koladvīpa. Śrī Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura met the self-realised soul, Śrī Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, who was to become his spiritual master in *bhāgavata-paramparā*, at Sūrya-kuṇḍa.

Kyoṅ Nāi (Konāi)

Kyoṅ Nāi was an appointed meeting place of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was waiting for Śrīmatī Rādhikā here. Some of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's friends had wanted to test Kṛṣṇa's eagerness to meet with Her, so they had arrived early, and hidden Śrīmatījī in a nearby *kuñja*. When He saw the *sakhīs* Kṛṣṇa asked eagerly, “*Kyoṅ nā āi?* – Why has Kīśorījī not come?” To increase His longing they answered: “Abhimanyu is home today and Jaṭilā and Kuṭilā are vigilantly keeping watch. She cannot leave the house, so there is a no possibility of Her coming to see You.”

This news distressed Kṛṣṇa and it showed on His face. Pleased to see Him afflicted by separation from Śrīmatījī, the *sakhīs* brought Her out from the *kuñja*. In this way they arranged Her meeting with Kṛṣṇa. Since Kṛṣṇa asked the question *Kyoñ nā āi?* here, this place was named Kyoñ Nāi. In the course of time it has become known as Konāi. The village is four miles north of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Gvāla-kuṇḍa and Go-kuṇḍa are places of *darśana* here.

Bhadāvāra

The present name of Bhadāvāra is Bhadāhara. It is the residence of Bhadrā, who is one of the eight group-leaders (*yūtheśvarīs*). Bhadrā is *taṭastha*, or neutral, towards Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and *suhṛda*, or friendly, with Śrīmatī Candrāvalī.

Gāñṭholī

Once, at Gāñṭholī, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala were seated on a throne, intoxicated in *rāsa-vilāsa* and playing Holī. Śrī Lalitā quietly tied the corners of Their cloths in a knot (*gāñṭha*) so when They stood up, They were tied together. All the *sakhīs* laughed to see this. On account of this confidential pastime, this place is called Gāñṭholī. It is situated on the Govardhana-Ḍīg highway.

Sometimes, to bestow His *darśana* to His devotees, Śrī Nāthajī used to come to this village on the pretext of escaping the hands of the barbarians. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to Govardhana, He had a strong desire to have *darśana* of Śrī Nātha Gopālajī. At the same time, the priests feared an attack by the invaders so they brought Śrī Nāthajī to Gāñṭholī for three days. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never climbed on Govardhana Hill because He considered him to be the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is why His followers, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, do not climb on Govardhana Hill to have *darśana* of Śrī Nāthajī. Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana never set foot on Govardhana. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to know that Gopālajī was present in the village of Gāñṭholī, He stayed here for three days, circumabulated Him,

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chanted prayers, and danced and performed ecstatic *sankīrtana* before Gopālajī.

Gulāla-kuṇḍa

Gulāla-kuṇḍa is situated near Gāṅṭholī on the left side of the road. In springtime the *gulāla* colour (the pink colour of Holi) mixes with the water of this *kuṇḍa*. It is said that after playing Holi, Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* bathed in this *kuṇḍa* and washed the pink colour from their bodies and clothes. This is how the pond received the name Gulāla-kuṇḍa.

Beheja

This place is situated on the Govardhana–Dīg road, about six miles from Govardhana. Indra, was an offender of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, yet he kept Surabhī in front of him and shamelessly approached Śrī Kṛṣṇa here to apologise for his offence. The Hindi word for



Gulāla-kuṇḍa

“shameless” is *behayā*, and therefore this place became known as Beheja. One can have *darśana* of Sūrya-kuṇḍa, Revatī-kuṇḍa, and the temples of Bihārījī and Śrī Rādhā-Kāntajī here. From Beheja, the *parikramā* proceeds on via Devaśīrṣa and Muniśīrṣa. Two miles west of Beheja is Ḍig.

Devaśīrṣa-sthāna

Devaśīrṣa-sthāna is a place of Kṛṣṇa’s cow herding pastimes. The demigods (*devas*) of the topmost (*śīrṣa*) place offered hymns and prayers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa here. Thus, this place became known as Devaśīrṣa. It lies five miles north of Laṭhāvana.

Muniśīrṣa-sthāna

Muniśīrṣa-sthāna is west of Devaśīrṣa. Many prominent sages (*ṛṣis* and *munis*) performed austerities here and received the *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Śīrṣa* also means “prominent”. Hence, this place has been called Muniśīrṣa-sthāna. Today its name is Muḍaśerasa. An ancient and famous temple of Candrāvalī-devī stands here.

Sūryapatanavana

Sūryapatanavana lies three miles from Beheja, and is currently called Sānvarīkherā. Sūryadeva worshipped the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa here. In this area, pilgrims can have *darśana* of Sūrya-kuṇḍa, Gopāla-kuṇḍa, Gvāla-kuṇḍa, and the temples of Gopāla and of Bihārījī.

Ḍirghapura (Ḍig)

Coming from Chaṭṭīkarā, Nanda Bābā camped at Ḍerāvalī, and from there he came and camped here at Ḍig. He stayed here for some time before going to Kāmyavana, and from Kāmyavana he went to Nandagaon. At Ḍirghapura Śrī Kṛṣṇa shook, or loosened (*digā*), the patience, virtue and bashfulness of Śrīmatī Rādhikā by the charm of His beauty and the sweetness of His flute. Hence, this place has been named Ḍig.

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Ḍīg was also famous during Tretā-yuga. Just as Śatrughna and Bharata inhabited Mathurā and Bharatapura respectively, Lakṣmaṇa resided in Dīrghapura. There is a famous temple of Lakṣmaṇa here. Kṛṣṇa-kunḍa, the temple of Sākṣī-Gopāla and Rūpa-sāgara are some of the places to visit here. The Vraja-yātrā camps here while performing *parikramā*.

Paramādanā

This place is currently called Paramadīrā, but its true name is Pramodavana. Here the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, became very delighted upon meeting each other. *Pramoda* means “delight” or “happiness”. In the north of the village is Kṛṣṇa-kunḍa, and in the east is Caraṇa-kunḍa.

Setu-kandarā

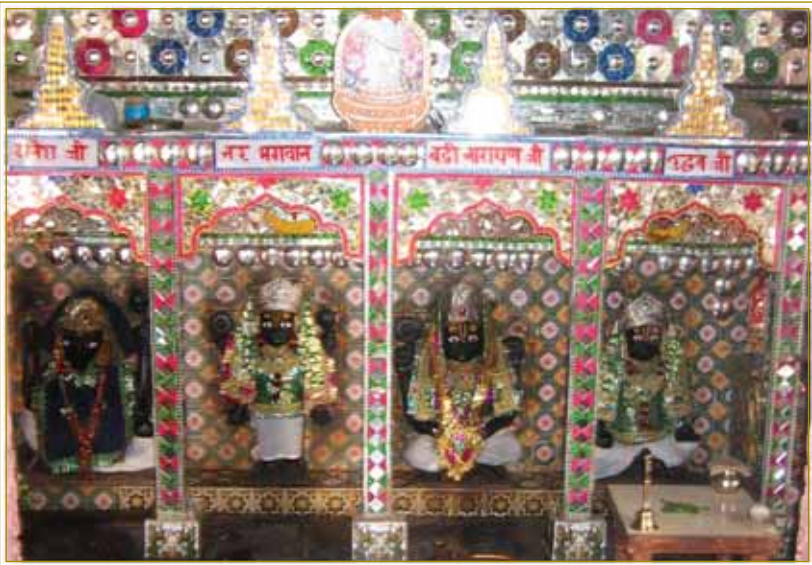
The present name of Setu-kandarā is Seū. Situated between two hills, this is a delightful place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa herded the cows. It is also known as Seū-kandarā because it lies between two hills. Ādi-badrī is one and half miles north of here.

Ādi-badrī

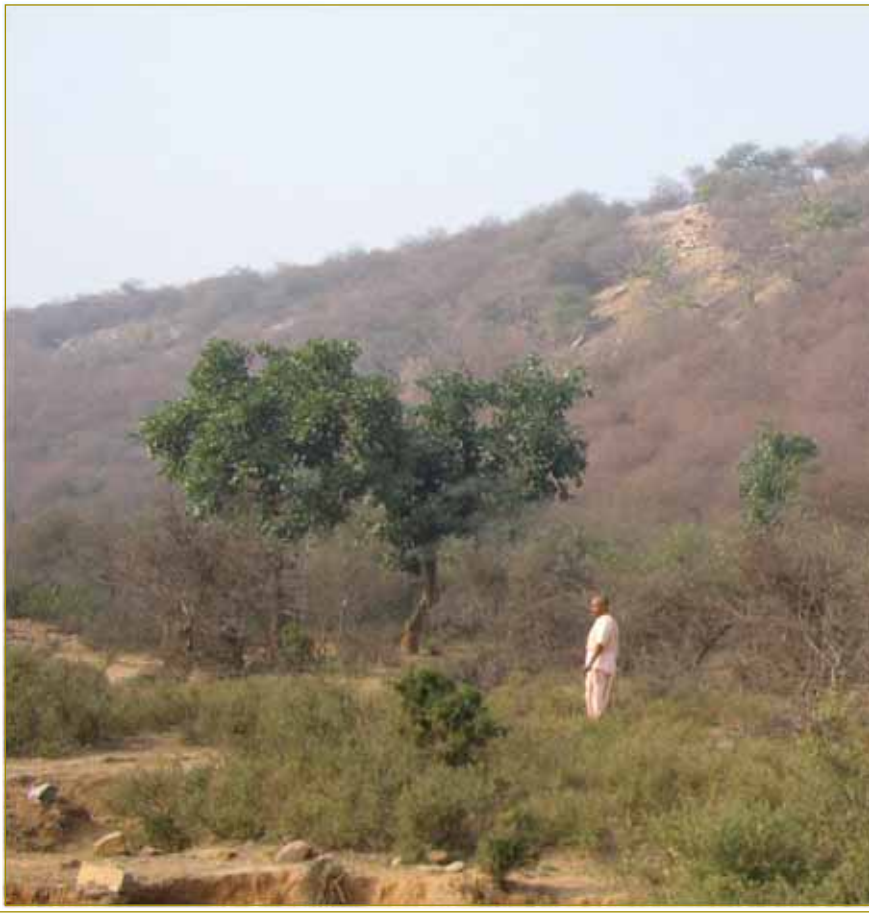
This is the place of Ādi-badrī-nārāyaṇa. Once, Nanda and the other *gopas* and *gopīs* wanted to go to Badrī-nārāyaṇa in the Himālayas. Understanding this to be their heartfelt desire, Śrī Kṛṣṇa brought them here for *darśana* of Ādi-badrī. Ādi-badrī is the source of even Badrī-viśāla in the Himālayas. The pilgrim can have *darśana* of Badrī-nārāyaṇa, Nara-Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, Kuvera, Nārada Ṛṣi, Uddhavajī and others here. (Indra sent *apsarās* to break the austerities of Nara-Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, but Nara-Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi manifested the beautiful celestial damsel Urvaśī from his left thigh, and shattered the pride of Indra.) Just as Alakānandā and Tapta-kunḍa are situated in Badrī in the Himālayas, they are also present here. In Badrī the water of Tapta-kunḍa is hot, but here the water of Tapta-kunḍa is cool.



The gate to Ādi-badrī



The deities at Ādi-badrī



A little further on from Ādi-badrī, on top of the hill, is the divine *darśana* of Būḍhe-badrī, Gandhamādana Hill, Tapovana and so on. This very attractive place is surrounded by lush, green mountain-ranges. This is the place of worship of many sages and also of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. The natural scenery of this place resembles that of Badrī-nārāyaṇa. Below the hills of Ādi-badrī is the village of Ālīpura, inhabited by people of the *meva* caste.



Nara-Nārāyaṇa-parvata

Ālipura

The hills of Ādi-badrī ascend from Ālipura. Previously, this village was also named Ādi-badrī, but the Muslims changed it to Ālipura, just as they converted the names of Ayodhyā to Faizābād, Vṛndāvana to Fakīrābād, Mathurā to Mamīnābād and Prayāga to Allāhābād.

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Tāpta-kuṇḍa



Yamunotrī

Śānarā-śikhara

Śānarā-śikhara is also called Dhavala-parvata. *Dhavala* means “white”. It is also known as Navanīta-parvata, because it has the whitish colour of fresh butter (*navanīta*). A grove of *kadamba* trees lies nearby. Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa used to swing here and also performed many other pastimes. Adjacent to the *kadamba* grove are Nīla-parvata and Ānandādri (a mountain pass). These places are all situated next to Khoha.

Information regarding the location of the various places on the hill and the distance between them is marked on a stone here, which is testimony to the untiring efforts of the Gauḍīya *gosvāmīs* to manifest the glories of these places. One can easily understand what hard labour this task took.

Indraulī

Indraulī is Indulekhā Sakhī’s village. Indra, the king of the demigods, worshipped Śrī Kṛṣṇa here to free himself from his offence. For these reasons the village is named Indraulī or Indrolī. Pilgrims can have *darśana* of Indra-kuṇḍa, Indra-kūpa and Indulekhā’s *kuñja* here.

Godṛṣṭivana

Godṛṣṭivana is presently called Guhānā. It lies one mile from Paramodarā. Godṛṣṭivana is a place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s cow herding pastimes. Kṛṣṇa used to stand on top of a high hillock to look out for His cows. From there, He would call them with His flute – Śyāmālī, Dhavalī, Kālindī and so on – and they would come running to Him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa counted the cows on His jewelled necklace, and only when He was satisfied with a full count would He return with them to the cowshed. Gopāla-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa lie here. This is also the birthplace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *sakhā* Sudāma.

Kanovāro

Kanovāro is another of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's cow herding places. It is also Kaṇva Muni's famous place of worship, which is why it has been named Kanovāro. Nearby, one can have *darśana* of Sunaharā Kadamba-khaṇḍī, Pānihārī-kuṇḍa, Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa and other places.



After taking *darśana* of Badrī-nārāyaṇa (Ādi-badrī), some pilgrims go straight to Kāmyavana via Seū-ghāṭī and Indraulī. Kāmyavana lies two miles north-west of Indraulī. Some pilgrims make their way from Badrī-nārāyaṇa to Kāmyavana via Guhānā, Khoha-gaon, Dhavala-parvata and so forth. Other pilgrims go to Kāmyavana five miles north via Ādi-badrī, Ālīpura and Paśapa-gaon. Some proceed to Kāmyavana after having *darśana* of Ādi-kedāranātha, which lies five miles west of Paśapa-gaon. Kāmyavana is situated six miles north-east from Kedārnātha. The village Bilonda lies two miles north-east of Kedāranātha, Caraṇa-pahāḍī lies two miles north-east from Bilonda, and Kāmyavana lies two miles north-east of Caraṇa-pahāḍī.



Kedāranātha Mahādeva



Ādi-kedāranātha

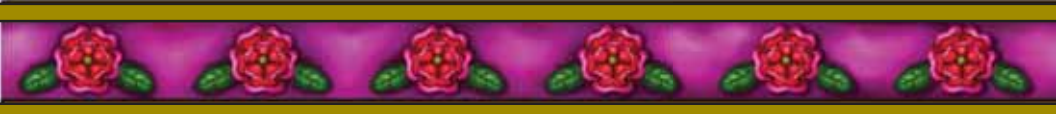
Endnotes

- ¹ *hantāyam adrir abalā hari-dāsa-varyo
yad rāma-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparśa-pramodaḥ
mānaṁ tanoti saha-go-gaṇayos tayor yat
pānīya-sūyavasa-kandara-kandamūlaiḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.21.18)*
- ² *Pratibhū* means “to be equal to”. A *pratibhū-
vighraha* is a deity that is considered non-
different from the original deity it replaces.
- ³ The Vallabha *sampradāya*.
- ⁴ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Tenth Canto,
Chapter 24.
- ⁵ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā*,
Chapter 4.
- ⁶ One who is *niṣkiñcana* has no desire to
enjoy this material world, and thus nothing
to do with this temporary world.
- ⁷ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā
18.35–54)*.



Kāmyavāṇa

(Kāmvāṇa)







“



āmyavana is the fourth among the twelve forests of Vraja-maṇḍala and it is one of the topmost forests. The fortunate person who circumambulates this forest is revered within Vraja-dhāma.”¹

“O Mahārāja, thereafter lies Kāmyavana, where Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed many childhood pastimes. Bathing in Kāma and other ponds in this forest fulfils all kinds of desires, even the desire for service to Kṛṣṇa that is imbued with *prema*.”²

The word *kāma* can only really be used to denote the *gopīs'* *prema* for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Premaiva gopa-rāmānām kāma ity āgamata prathām* (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.285). In other words, the pure *prema* of the *gopīs* exists solely to give Kṛṣṇa happiness, and does not carry even the slightest scent of worldly lust. In the scriptures it is only this *prema* that is referred to as *kāma*. The pure *prema* of the *gopīs* is wholly opposite to the lusty desires in this world. The only aim of the *gopīs'* *kāma*, which is devoid of

all varieties of such lust, is to give happiness to Kṛṣṇa, the abode of *prema*. Therefore, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures refer to the pure and unadulterated *prema* of the *gopīs* as *kāma*. Kāmyavana is the pastime place where the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa express such transcendental *prema*. In this forest, one can even attain, quite easily, the *gopīs'* genuine *prema* in the form of pure *kāma*, what to speak of being able to fulfil all kinds of worldly desires.

The word *kāmya* means “extremely beautiful”, “well adorned” or “highly attractive”. This forest within Vraja-manḍala is a most charming pastime place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Many pleasant lakes, wells, ponds, trees, creepers, flowers, fruits and species of birds contribute to its extraordinary beauty. Hence, it is called Kāmyavana.

PASTIME PLACES IN KĀMYAVANA

According to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, there are eighty-four sacred ponds, eighty-four temples and eighty-four pillars in Kāmyavana. It is said that a famous king named Śrī Kāmasena established them all. It is also accepted that the demigods and demons jointly constructed one hundred sixty-eight pillars here.

Kāmyavana has countless small and large *kuṇḍas*, as well as a *parikramā* of fourteen miles. Vimala-kuṇḍa is the famous sacred place of this forest. After bathing here, one performs *parikramā* of Kāmyavana or proceeds to take *darśana* of the other holy places in Kāmyavana. Those places include Gopikā-kuṇḍa, Suvarṇapura, Gayā-kuṇḍa and Dharma-kuṇḍa. The throne of Dharmarāja is situated at Dharma-kuṇḍa and is a place of *darśana*. Next come Yajña-kuṇḍa, the Pañca Tirtha-sarovara of the Pāṇḍavas, Paramokṣa-kuṇḍa and Maṇikarṇikā-kuṇḍa. Just nearby are Nivāsa-kuṇḍa and Yaśodā-kuṇḍa. Somewhat further on are Manokāmanā-kuṇḍa, Gopikāramaṇa-kuṇḍa, Setubandha Rāmeśvara-kuṇḍa, Dhyāna-kuṇḍa, Tapta-kuṇḍa, Jal-vihāra-kuṇḍa, Jal-krīḍā-kuṇḍa, Raṅgīlā-kuṇḍa, Chabīlā-kuṇḍa, Jakīlā-kuṇḍa, Matīlā-kuṇḍa,

Datīlā-kuṇḍa, Pañca-kuṇḍa, Ghoṣarānī-kuṇḍa, Vihvala-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kuṇḍa, Gomatī-kuṇḍa, Dvārakā-kuṇḍa, Māna-kuṇḍa, Lalitā-kuṇḍa, Viśākhā-kuṇḍa, Dohanī-kuṇḍa, Mohinī-kuṇḍa, Balabhadra-kuṇḍa, Caturbhujā-kuṇḍa, Surabhi-kuṇḍa, Vatsa-kuṇḍa, Luk-lukī-kuṇḍa, Govinda-kuṇḍa, Netramīcana-kuṇḍa, Phisalanī-śīlā, Vyomāsura's cave, Bhojana-thālī, the marriage-place of Sumanā Sakhī, and Lalitā Granthi-datta-sthāna.

Thereafter come Viṣṇu-cinha-pāda-parvata, Garuḍa-tīrtha, Kapila-tīrtha, the place of Lohajāṅgha Ṛṣi and Hoḍa-sthāna. North of these holy places is the place of Indulekhā-devī, and nearby on top of the hill is the place of Balarāma and the mark of Balarāma's plough. Further north is Kṛṣṇa-kūpa, and nearby is Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa. Beyond are the hidden Lokeśvara-tīrtha, Varāha-kuṇḍa, Satī-kuṇḍa and Candrasakhī-puṣkariṇī; and next to these places are the deity of Candrasekhara Śiva and Śṛṅgāra-tīrtha. South of the hill situated in that place is a *bāvadī*, or a deep tank with steps, named Prabhālallī. West of this tank is Bhāradvāja Ṛṣi-kūpa. To its north is another Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa and to its east is Kṛṣṇa-kūpa. These three wells (*kūpas*) all lie near the hill mentioned earlier. At the top of the hill is the deity of Bhadreśvara Śiva. After this, one comes to the deity of Alakṣa Garuḍa and the *āśrama* of Pippalāda Ṛṣi.

After having *darśana* of these places, one proceeds to Dihuhālī and Rādhā-puṣkariṇī. In the eastern, northern, western and southern parts of this *puṣkariṇī* (large lake or pond) lie Lalitā-puṣkariṇī, Viśākhā-puṣkariṇī, Candrāvalī-puṣkariṇī and Candrabhāga-puṣkariṇī respectively. In the south-eastern part is Līlāvātī-puṣkariṇī and in the north-western part is Prabhāvātī-puṣkariṇī. The *puṣkariṇīs* of sixty-four *sakhīs* lie here. Further on is Kuśa-sthālī. One can have *darśana* here of Kameśvara Mahādeva and the place where Śaṅkhacūḍa was killed. To the north are the deity of Candrasekhara, of Vimaleśvara and a deity of Varāha. Here, one can also visit the five Pāṇḍavas with Draupadī, and further on are Vṛndā-devī with Govindajāī, Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha,

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Navanīta-rāya, Gokuleśvara and Śrī Rāmacandra. Other places of *darśana* include Caraṇa-pahāḍī, Śrī Rādhā-Gopinātha, Śrī Rādhā-Mohana (Gopālajī) and Caurāsī-khambā. The most well-known of these pastime places are described below.

Vimala-kuṇḍa

This famous pond is situated about four-hundred metres south-west of the village of Kāma. The following deities preside around Vimala-kuṇḍa in this order: (1) Dāūjī, (2) Sūryadeva, (3) Śrī Nilakaṇṭheśvara Mahādeva, (4) Śrī Govardhana-nātha, (5) Śrī Madana-mohana and Kāmyavana-bihārī, (6) Śrī Vimala-bihārī, (7) Vimalā-devī, (8) Śrī Muralī-manohara, (9) Bhagavatī Gaṅgā and (10) Śrī Gopālajī.

According to the *Garga-saṁhitā*, in ancient times a glorious king named Vimala lived in Campaka Nagarī in the country of



Vimala-kuṇḍa

Sindhu. At first, none of his six thousand queens bore him any children, but, by the mercy of Śrī Yājñavalkya Ṛṣi, many beautiful girls took birth from the wombs of those queens. In their previous births, all these girls had been the women of Janakapurī who had desired to obtain Śrī Rāmacandra as their husband. The girls who took birth in King Vimala's home eventually reached a marriageable age. On the advice of Mahārṣi Yājñavalkya, the king sent his emissary to Mathurāpurī to search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whom he deemed to be the suitable husband for his daughters. While on his way, the emissary was fortunate to meet Grandfather Bhīṣma, who sent him to Śrī Vṛndāvana, since Śrī Kṛṣṇa was there at that time. Upon arriving in Vṛndāvana, the royal emissary gave Śrī Kṛṣṇa King Vimala's letter of invitation, which requested Kṛṣṇa to come to Campaka Nagarī to marry the princesses. After receiving Mahārāja Vimala's invitation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to Campaka Nagarī and brought the princesses back with Him to this pleasing Kāmyavana, situated within Vraja-maṇḍala. He assumed as many forms as there were princesses and accepted them all. He performed *rāsa* and other playful pastimes with these teenage girls, thus fulfilling their long-cherished desire. The tears of happiness that flowed from their eyes filled a pond, which became known as Vimala-kuṇḍa. By bathing in this *kuṇḍa*, all kinds of desires – both worldly and transcendental – are fulfilled and one's heart becomes pure and instilled with *vraja-bhakti*.

It is generally said that all the holy places of the universe come to Vraja during Cāturmāsya. Once, Tirtharāja Puṣkara did not come. Śrī Kṛṣṇa remembered Yogamāyā, and merely by His recollection, a very strong current of water shot out of the earth. Astonishingly, a supremely beautiful and completely pure *kiśorī* appeared from that sacred current, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa sported with that beautiful *kiśorī* in those waters. The *kiśorī* completely satisfied the supremely *rasika* Śrī Kṛṣṇa with her beauty and pure, loving service and He gave her a boon: "From today you will be known as Vimala-devī, and this *kuṇḍa* will be named after you. By bathing in

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this *kuṇḍa*, one will receive seven times the pious merit of bathing in Tirtharāja Puṣkara.” Since then, this pond has become known as *Vimala-kuṇḍa*.

Many great sages have resided on the bank of this *kuṇḍa* to obtain *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. It is well known that Maharṣi Durvāsā and the Pāṇḍavas resided here. Every pilgrim or group of pilgrims performing *Vraja-manḍala parikramā* stays at *Vimala-kuṇḍa* and begins *parikramā* of *Kāmyavana* from here only.

ŚRĪ VṚNDĀ-DEVĪ and ŚRĪ GOVINDADEVA

This is *Kāmyavana*’s most famous temple. *Darśana* of *Vṛndā-devī* is rare in *Vraja-manḍala*, but here one can have her special *darśana*. Śrī *Rādhā-Govindadeva* are also residing here. Nearby is Śrī *Viṣṇu-simhāsana*, or the throne (*simhāsana*) of Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*. Close by is *Caraṇa-kuṇḍa*, where the lotus feet of the Divine Couple Śrī *Rādhā-Govinda* were bathed.

After Śrī *Rūpa*, Śrī *Sanātana* and the other *Gosvāmīs* left this world, the narrow-minded Mughal emperor *Aurangzeb* destroyed the famous temples of *Vṛndāvana*, *Mathurā* and other locations in *Vraja*. At that time, the *Mahārāja* of *Jaipura*, who was a great



Śrī Rādhā-Govindadeva



Vṛndā-devī

devotee, brought the famous deities of Vraja to Jaipura. These included Śrī Govinda, Śrī Gopīnātha, Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara and Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava. On his way, he rested for some days in Kāmyavana. The deities were taken from the chariots and kept at various locations where regular services to Them were performed, such as bathing, offering *bhoga* and putting Them to rest. They were later carried to Jaipura and other places. Eventually, large temples were constructed at the places where the deities of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha and Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana had stayed in Kāmyavana, and *pratibhū-vigrahas*³ of the original deities were installed there.

Śrī Vṛndā-devī came as far as Kāmyavana, but she did not leave Vraja to go further. There is thus a special *darśana* of Śrī Vṛndā-devī here.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates, like Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmīs, re-established the lost pastime places of Vraja-maṅḍala. Before their arrival in Vraja, Kāmyavana was considered to be Vṛndāvana. However, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu established the place situated near Mathurā as Śrī Dhāma Vṛndāvana. It is impossible for Yamunājī, Cīra-ghāṭa, Nidhuvana, Kālīya-daha, Keśī-ghāṭa, Sevā-kuñja, Rāsa-sthalī Vamśīvaṭa and Śrī Gopīśvara Mahādeva to be situated in Kāmyavana. Therefore, that place where the pastime places like Vimala-kuṇḍa, Kāmeśvara Mahādeva, Caraṇa-pahāḍī, Setubandha Rāmeśvara and others are present is Kāmyavana, and it is without doubt separate from Vṛndāvana. Vṛndā-devī resides in Vṛndāvana only. She is the presiding deity of the groves of Vṛndāvana and of the pastimes of the Divine Couple in those groves. Therefore, she now resides in Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha in Śrī Dhāma Vṛndāvana, where she grants her divine *darśana*.

In the vicinity of the Śrī Govindadeva Temple, one can have *darśana* of places like Garuḍajī, Candrabhāṣā-kuṇḍa, Candreśvara Mahādeva, Varāha-kuṇḍa, Varāha-kūpa, Yajña-kuṇḍa and Dharma-kuṇḍa.

Dharma-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* lies in the eastern part of Kāmyavāṇa. Śrī Nārāyaṇa is present here as *dharma*. Nearby is a platform (*vedī*) named Viśākhā-vedī. There is a special rule that one should bathe in this pond on Kṛṣṇāṣṭamī (the eighth day of the dark moon) on a Wednesday in the month of Bhadra during the constellation named Śravaṇā. Within the area of Dharma-kuṇḍa, there are many places one may visit for *darśana*, such as Nara-Nārāyaṇa-kuṇḍa, Nīla-varāha, Pañca Pāṇḍava, Hanumānjī, Pañca Pāṇḍava-kuṇḍa (Pañca-tīrtha), Maṇikarṇikā and Viśveśvara Mahādeva.

The five Pāṇḍavas resided in this attractive Kāmyavāṇa for a long time during their exile to the forest. Once, Mahārānī Draupadī and the Pāṇḍavas felt very thirsty. It was summer and the nearby ponds and other sources of water had dried up. Water was not available anywhere, not even from distant places. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira gave one empty pot to his valiant brother Bhīmasena



Dharma-kuṇḍa

and told him to fill it with clean water. The intelligent Bhīma saw that birds were flying to and from a particular place, so he headed in that direction. After some time, he came to a beautiful lake full of clean, fragrant water. Being very thirsty, he thought to quench his own thirst first before carrying water back to his brothers. However, as soon as he stepped in the lake, a Yakṣa appeared before him and said, “Answer my questions before daring to drink water, otherwise you will die.” Ignoring the order of the Yakṣa, the great and valiant Bhīmasena filled his palms with some water, but upon doing so he immediately fainted to the ground.

Noting Bhīmasena’s delay in returning, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira sent his brothers one by one to go and fetch water – first Arjuna, then Nakula and then Sahadeva. Upon reaching the lake, however, they all met the same fate as Bhīma, having attempted to drink water without following the Yakṣa’s command. Finally, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira went himself and found his brothers all lying on the ground unconscious. He became very worried. He decided to quench his thirst before trying to revive them, but as soon as he went to do so, the Yakṣa appeared and told Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira that he had to correctly answer his questions before he could drink any water. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira patiently requested the Yakṣa to ask his questions.

Yakṣa: Who causes the sun to rise?

Yudhiṣṭhira: The Supreme Lord causes the sun to rise.

Yakṣa: What is weightier than the earth itself? What is higher than even the sky? What travels faster than the wind? And what is greater in number than blades of grass?

Yudhiṣṭhira: One’s mother is heavier than the earth. One’s father is higher than the sky. The mind is swifter than air, and the thoughts that spring from the mind are more numerous than blades of grass.

Yakṣa: Which is the best *dharma* in the world? What is the best kind of forbearance?

Yudhiṣṭhira: The best *dharma* in the world is mercy. To tolerate the dualities of this world – like pleasure and sorrow, profit and loss, and birth and death – is the best kind of forbearance.

Yakṣa: Who is the invincible enemy of human beings? What is their endless disease? Who is a saintly person, and who is not a saintly person?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Anger is the invincible enemy of human beings. Greed is their endless disease. One who does good to all living entities is a saintly person, and a cruel person who has no control over his senses is not a saintly person.

Yakṣa: Who is happy? What is the greatest wonder? What is life's real path? What is newsworthy?

Yudhiṣṭhira: He who has no debt, he who is not in a foreign land, and he who is able to eat simply is happy. Every day, living beings make their way to the abode of Yamārāja, the god of death, but those who are left behind think they will live forever. There is no greater wonder than this. Argument has no place in determining the correct path. The Śrutis are diverse, and the opinions of the sages divided. The truth of *dharma* is thus very deep. Therefore, the path that is followed by great personalities is the real path. Time is cooking all living beings in the frying pan of illusion and allurement, which represents this material world. It shuffles them with the ladle of months and seasons, and cooks them in the fire of the sun, which burns up the fuel of day and night. This is the only news in this world.

Yakṣa: O King, you have answered all my questions correctly. You may therefore select any one of your brothers and he will return to life.

Yudhiṣṭhira: Among all my brothers, let dark-complexioned and very powerful Nakula return to life.

Yakṣa: King, why do you want Nakula to be brought back to life?
Why not Bhīma, who has the strength of ten thousand elephants, or the invincible archer Arjuna?

Yudhiṣṭhira: I cannot give up virtue. I am of the opinion that the supreme virtue is to have equal feelings for everyone. My father had two wives, Kuntī and Mādri. In my opinion, both of them should have sons. Kuntī and Mādri mean the same to me. I want to preserve this equality; therefore, Nakula should return to life.

Yakṣa: O topmost devotee, you have more respect for virtue than for time and wealth. Therefore, all your brothers should live again.

That Yakṣa was none other than Dharmarāja (Śrī Nārāyaṇa) Himself, who had desired to test the *dharma* of his son Yudhiṣṭhira. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira passed the examination.



One day, when the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī were living here during their exile, Mahārānī Draupadī went alone to take bath in Vimala-kuṇḍa. Meanwhile, the Pāṇḍavas were at their residence, free of anxieties and deeply absorbed in narrations about the Supreme Lord. Jayadratha, the brother-in-law of both Duryodhana and the Pāṇḍavas, was attracted to Draupadī. He was waiting for an opportunity to find Draupadī alone so he could kidnap her easily. In this way, he would dishonour the Pāṇḍavas. On this day, fate had it that he found Draupadī alone bathing in Vimala-kuṇḍa away from her residence. Jayadratha tried to take Draupadī with him to his kingdom by threat and guile, but Draupadī, the crest jewel of chaste ladies, firmly refused. This made Jayadratha furious, and he forcefully pulled her up on to his chariot and drove the horses very fast.

Draupadī started loudly calling out to Arjuna, Bhīma and Kṛṣṇa for protection. Somehow, her loud cries reached the ears of

Arjuna and Bhīma, and the two mighty warriors immediately ran after the chariot with great speed. The great warrior Arjuna, who single-handedly could face up to ten thousand opponents at one time, stopped Jayadratha's chariot by shooting arrows of fire at it. Jayadratha jumped from the chariot and fled for his life, but Bhīma outran him and caught him. Both brothers submitted Jayadratha before Draupadī and then the three of them went before Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. Bhīma was furious, "This criminal should be killed immediately." Arjuna supported Bhīma. However, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira pacified them both. "This degraded person has committed an offence at the feet of Draupadī," he said. "Therefore, she should choose a suitable punishment for him."

Draupadī then gravely spoke, "Needless to say, he has committed a horrible crime, yet he is your sister's husband. I do not want to see my sister-in-law cry for the rest of her life as a widow. It is therefore best to release him." Bhīma, however, was intent on having him killed. They finally concluded that for a respectable person dishonour is equal to death, and therefore Jayadratha should have his head shaven clean, but in such a way as to give him five tufts of hair. Similarly, before releasing him, they would shave his face leaving only a beard. Bhīma shaved Jayadratha's head and face as planned, thereby dishonouring him. He then released him. Jayadratha went away greatly insulted and performed severe austerities with the aim of being able to kill the Pāṇḍavas. However, Arjuna killed him in the Mahābhārata War, by following the instructions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



The wicked Duryodhana was always anxious to destroy the Pāṇḍavas completely. Once, while the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī were living here during their exile, he invited Maharṣi Durvāsā and fed him a sumptuous, delicious meal with great honour. Durvāsā was satisfied and requested Duryodhana to ask for a boon. With folded hands, Duryodhana said, "Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira is my

elder brother. Please accept his hospitality and go to his residence with your sixty thousand disciples, but go in the afternoon. The Pāṇḍavas are currently living in Kāmyavana.”

Duryodhana knew well that the Pāṇḍavas served their guests with extreme care. Draupadī had a pot that had been given to her by Sūryadeva. The cooking done in that one pot could feed innumerable persons to their satisfaction, but as soon as Draupadī had eaten and cleaned the pot, it could provide no more food until she cooked again. Draupadī would feed any guests as well as the Pāṇḍavas, and then clean the pot without fail before the afternoon. Durvāsā and his sixty thousand disciples were to arrive there in the afternoon, so the Pāṇḍavas would not be able to feed them. Duryodhana hoped that the very hot-tempered Durvāsā Ṛṣi would curse the Pāṇḍavas and thus burn them to ashes.

Maharṣi Durvāsā was fully aware of the glories of the Pāṇḍavas, who were devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. However, it is difficult for even the demigods to understand his contrary activities. Only he knows what, when and why he does what he does. Thus, he and sixty thousand sages reached the residence of the Pāṇḍavas in Kāmyavana in the afternoon. Upon seeing him, the Pāṇḍavas became very happy. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira worshipped him and requested him to accept his hospitality. Maharṣi said, “We are now going to bathe in Vimala-kuṇḍa and will come back very soon. You should arrange for our meals. We will eat here.” Saying this, Durvāsā left to bathe together with his whole entourage.

The Pāṇḍavas now became very concerned. What arrangement could be made to feed these sages? They called Draupadī and asked her if she could arrange to feed a gathering of sixty thousand, but her pot had already been cleaned and turned upside down. She considered hard what to do to save the Pāṇḍavas but could not think of a plan. At last, she began calling out to her dear friend Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a voice filled with distress. How could Dvārakānātha not come upon hearing her call? He immediately appeared in front of Draupadī and said, “Sakhī, I am very hungry. Give Me

something to eat.” Draupadī answered, “You are hungry and I have nothing at home. My pot has been cleaned and is lying upside down. The extremely hot-tempered Maharṣi Durvāsā together with his sixty thousand disciples are about to come to take their meal. When he finds that there is nothing to eat, he will definitely annihilate the Pāṇḍavas. Therefore, first please arrange for them to be fed.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “I cannot do anything without eating and drinking, so please bring your pot.”

In a sad voice Draupadī said, “There is nothing in the pot. I have cleaned it very thoroughly.”

“Still, you please bring it. I want to see.”

Draupadī brought the pot and put it in Kṛṣṇa’s hands. Kṛṣṇa looked into it and became joyful. A very tiny piece of leafy vegetable was stuck to the side of the pot. Śrī Kṛṣṇa scraped it off with His nail and put in His mouth. He then filled His stomach with water poured by Draupadī’s hands. “*Tṛpto ’smi, tṛpto ’smi!* – I am satisfied, I am satisfied!” he exclaimed, and he began to pat His stomach with His hand. He even belched in satisfaction. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then sent Bhīmasena to quickly go and call the sages. The great warrior Bhīma, club in hand, started towards Vimāla-kuṇḍa.

Maharṣi Durvāsā and his disciples had been bathing in Vimāla-kuṇḍa when suddenly their stomachs felt completely full. They all started belching as if they had eaten a meal. When Durvāsā saw Bhīma coming towards them, the memory of the incident with Ambarīṣa Mahārāja entered his mind and he became frightened. He and his sixty thousand disciples quickly fled to Maharṣi-loka through the celestial pathways. Upon arriving at Vimāla-kuṇḍa, Bhīma could not find the sages anywhere. He returned and told Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, “I searched everywhere but could not find them.”

After learning what had happened from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Draupadī and the Pāṇḍavas became free from anxiety. If Śrī Kṛṣṇa is satisfied, then the whole universe is satisfied. This is indeed this episode’s

message to the world. This pastime of Śrī Kṛṣṇa took place here at Kāmyavana.



Another time, while the Pāṇḍavas were residing here, the wicked Duryodhana discovered their whereabouts and descended upon Kāmyavana with all his brothers, associates like Karṇa and Śakuni, relatives, friends, and an army of four divisions. For some days, he set up a very festive camp on the bank of Vimala-kuṇḍa just to humiliate the Pāṇḍavas.

When Indra came to know of this, he ordered his general Citrasena to arrest Duryodhana. Citrasena defeated Duryodhana's entire army, arrested him and took him to Indra by the aerial pathways, Duryodhana loudly shouting and screaming all the while. Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja heard his crying and ordered Bhīmasena to rescue him. But Bhīmasena objected, "Mahārāja, Duryodhana wanted to harm us, which is why our best well-wisher Citrasena has caught him and is taking him away. It is best if we remain quiet." Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira could not tolerate this. He looked at Arjuna and said, "Brother Arjuna, our brother Suyodhana [a name of Duryodhana used by Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira] is in danger, and it is our duty to rescue him. We can quarrel and fight among ourselves over some issue, but when it comes to others we one hundred five brothers are one. Quickly rescue Suyodhana." The mighty warrior Arjuna easily released Duryodhana from the hands of Citrasena, the general of the demigods, and with his arrows brought him down to stand before Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. He met Duryodhana very affectionately and respectfully sent him back to his place of residence. But the blackness of coal does not go away even if the coal is washed millions of times with soap. The affectionate behaviour of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira pierced Duryodhana's heart like a sharp iron rod. He considered himself dishonoured, and returned to Hastinapura highly agitated. Whoever God protects,

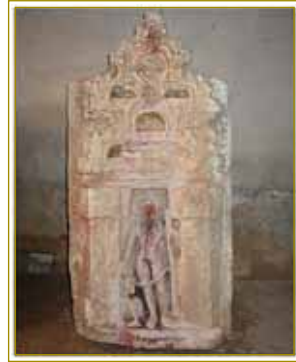
no one can harm. Indeed, no one can so much as twist a single hair of someone who is under Śrī Kṛṣṇa's shelter.

Nearby, at Pañca Tīrtha-sarovara, were some amazing deities of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī. This place is uninhabited, and therefore a thief was able to steal a few of the deities here some time ago, while others were broken. Since then, the remaining deities have been kept in the nearby temple of Kāmeśvara Mahādeva, where they are neglected.

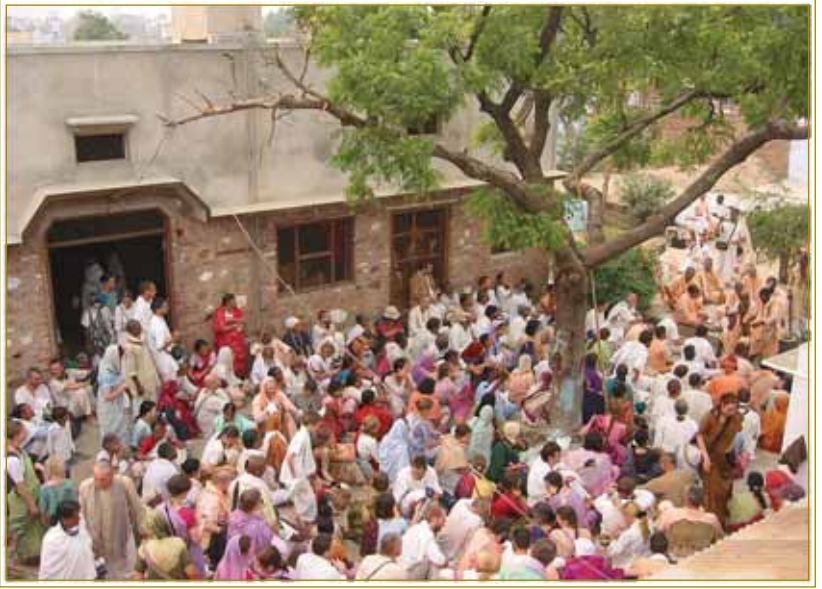
Dharma-kūpa, Dharma-kuṇḍa and many other places that seem to be connected with the Pāṇḍavas lie close by.



*Some of the few remaining deities
of the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī
that are being kept in the temple
of Kāmeśvara Mahādeva*



ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



The temple of Kāmeśvara Mahādeva



Kāmeśvara Mahādeva

Yaśodā-kuṇḍa

This place in Kāmyavana was the residence of Śrī Yaśodā's father. During His childhood, Śrī Kṛṣṇa would sometimes come to stay at this very attractive place with His mother. Sometimes, Nanda Bābā and his family and associates used to camp here with their cows. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* also grazed the cows here.

Bhakti-ratnākara mentions this holy place:

*dekha yaśodā-kuṇḍa parama nirmala
ethā gocāraṇe kṛṣṇa haīyā vihvala*

“See this supremely pure Yaśodā-kuṇḍa, where Kṛṣṇa joyfully herded His cows.”

Gayā-kuṇḍa

The holy place of Gayā resides at this place in Vraja-maṇḍala, performing worship of Kṛṣṇa. Agasta-kuṇḍa is also here. Gayā-kuṇḍa's southern bank is known as Agasta-ghāṭa. Bathing here and performing *tarpaṇa* (offering water to the demigods, sages and forefathers) and *piṇḍa-dāna* (offering homage to the dead souls) in the month of Āsvina on the day of the dark moon (Kṛṣṇapakṣa) are highly praised.

Prayāga-kuṇḍa

Tirtharāja Prayāga worshipped Śrī Kṛṣṇa here. The two *kuṇḍas* Prayāga and Puṣkara lie together here.

Dvārakā-kuṇḍa

Śrī Kṛṣṇa came to Vraja from Dvārakā and resided here in tents with His queens.

Dvārakā-kuṇḍa, Gomatī-kuṇḍa, Māna-kuṇḍa and Balabhadra-kuṇḍa

These four *kuṇḍas* are situated alongside each other.

Nārada-kuṇḍa

This is Nārada’s place of worship. Devarṣi Nārada became impatient here while singing about Kṛṣṇa’s sweet pastimes. *Bhakti-ratnakāra* says:

*dekhaha nārada kuṇḍa nārada eī khāne
haila mahā adhairya kṛṣṇera lilā gāne*

“Just see this Nārada-kuṇḍa, where Nārada lost all patience while singing about Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.”

Manokāmanā-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* and Kāma-sarovara are situated together between Vimala-kuṇḍa and Yaśodā-kuṇḍa. By bathing here, all desires of the heart are fulfilled. The *Skanda Purāṇa* states:

*tatra kāmasaro rājan! gopikāramaṇam saraḥ
tatra tīrtha sahasrāṇi sarāṁsi ca pṛthak-pṛthak*

“Gopikāramaṇa Kāma-sarovara is in Kāmyavana. All of the heart’s desires are fulfilled there. Thousands of other sacred places are present in that same Kāmyavana.”

Setubandha-sarovara

On the order of the *gopīs*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the mood of Śrī Rāma, had the monkeys construct a bridge here. Even today, one can see the ruins of this bridge of rocks (*setu-bandha*) in the lake. Rāmeśvara Mahādeva presides north of this lake. He was installed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa when Kṛṣṇa assumed the mood of Śrī Rāma. Laṅkāpurī, as a hillock, is situated to the south of the lake across from Rāmeśvara Mahādeva.

One day, the supremely playful Śrī Kṛṣṇa was sitting in the shade under the trees on the northern bank of this lake, together with the *gopīs*, and was joking and laughing with *vinodinī* Śrī Rādhikā. At that time, many monkeys from nearby places descended from the trees, being attracted by Kṛṣṇa’s sweet beauty. They respectfully

bowed at His lotus feet, sang in joy, jumped and danced. Several monkeys took very long leaps from trees on the southern bank of the lake and landed near His lotus feet, and Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa praised their bravery. Watching this amazing pastime charmed the *gopīs*. They began to describe the astonishing pastimes of Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra and said that He received help from monkeys. At that time, Lalitā said, “We have heard that in Tretā-yuga the greatly powerful Hanumān crossed the ocean in one leap, and today we are seeing with our own eyes monkeys crossing this lake in one single jump.”

Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa proudly declared, “Do you know, I was Śrī Rāma in Tretā-yuga. I performed all these pastimes as Rāma.”

Lalitā praised the amazing pastimes of Śrī Rāmacandra and then said, “You are a liar. You were never Rāma. Such bravery is impossible for You.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa smiled and replied, “You do not believe Me, but I did take the form of Rāma, and I married Sītā after breaking the bow of Śiva in Janakapurī. On the order of My father, with bow in hand, together with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, I roamed through Citrakūṭa and Daṇḍakāraṇya where I killed cruel and tyrannical demons. Thereafter, I wandered from forest to forest in separation from Sītā, destroyed Rāvaṇa and Laṅkāpurī with the help of the monkeys, and then returned to Ayodhyā. Now I carry a flute, roam from forest to forest tending and grazing the cows, and perform pastimes with My beloved Śrī Rādhikā in the company of you *gopīs*. Previously, when I came as Rāma, My bow and arrow made the three worlds tremble. Now, however, all living beings, both moving and non-moving, are becoming maddened by the sweet sound of My flute.”

Smiling, Lalitā said, “Mere words will not convince us. If You can show some valour like that of Śrī Rāma, then we might believe You. Śrī Rāmacandra arranged for a bridge to be constructed by bears and monkeys so that He could cross an ocean eight hundred miles wide with His entire army. If You can get these monkeys to construct a bridge over this small lake, then we can believe You.”

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Hearing Lalitā's words, Śrī Kṛṣṇa assembled all the monkeys in a moment by sounding His flute. He ordered them to construct a bridge over the lake using flat stones. On the order of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, thousands of monkeys immediately and eagerly started to help build the bridge, bringing stones from distant places. This occurred right before the *gopīs'* eyes. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then constructed the bridge with His own hands with the stones brought by the monkeys. He installed His Rāmeśvara Mahādeva at the start of the bridge, on the northern side of the lake. These places can be seen to this day. This lake is also called Laṅkā-kuṇḍa.

Luk-lukī-kuṇḍa

Luk-lukī-kuṇḍa is another site of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's water-sports (*jal-kṛīḍā*), and is therefore also known as Jal-kṛīḍā-kuṇḍa.

While grazing the cows, Kṛṣṇa would sometimes leave His play with the *sakhās* for a while to meet with the *gopīs* in this lovely, secluded place. Kṛṣṇa played hide-and-seek (*lukā-chipi*) here with the *vraja-ramaṇīs*. The *gopīs* closed their eyes, and Kṛṣṇa hid in a cave in a nearby hill. The *sakhīs* searched for Him everywhere, but



Luk-lukī-kuṇḍa

were unable to find Him. They became very worried. “Where could Kṛṣṇa have gone, leaving us behind?” they thought, and they began to meditate on Him. That place where they meditated (*dhyāna kī*) on Kṛṣṇa is called Dhyāna-kunḍa, and the cave (*kandarā*) in which Kṛṣṇa was hiding is called Luk-luka-kandarā.

Carāṇa-pahāḍī

After Śrī Kṛṣṇa entered the cave known as Luk-luka Kandarā, He appeared on top of the hill in which the cave is buried and played sweetly on His flute. The sound of the flute broke the *sakhīs*’ meditation on Him. They looked up to see their beloved playing His flute on the hill, and eagerly ran there to meet Him. The sound of the flute somewhat melted the hill, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s footprints manifested there. Even today, one can see these footprints very clearly. The stones on the nearby hill where the *sakhās* were playing and the calves were grazing also melted, leaving impressions of their feet and hooves, which are still clearly visible today, even after 5,000 years.



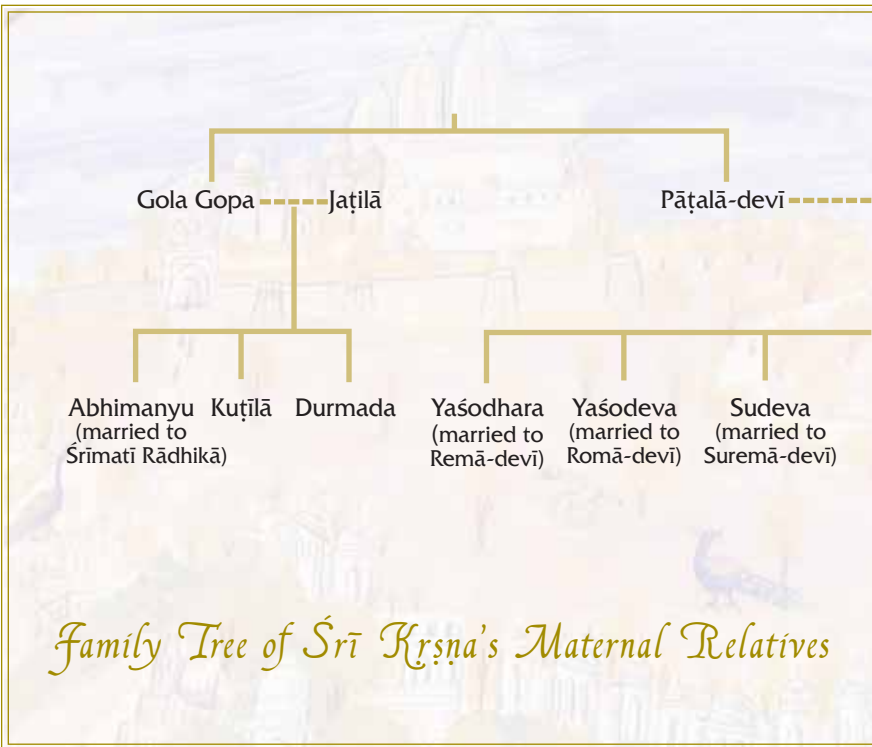
Carāṇa-pahāḍī

Vihvala-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* lies near Caraṇa-pahāḍī, as do the *kuṇḍas* of five *sakhās*. The *gopīs* became overwhelmed (*vihvala*) with *prema* here upon hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. This place has therefore become famous as Vihvala-kuṇḍa. The *kuṇḍas* of the five *sakhās* are named Raṅgīlā, Chabilā, Jakīlā, Matīlā and Datīlā-kuṇḍa. They are all situated near the village of Agrāvālī.

Yaśodharā-kuṇḍa

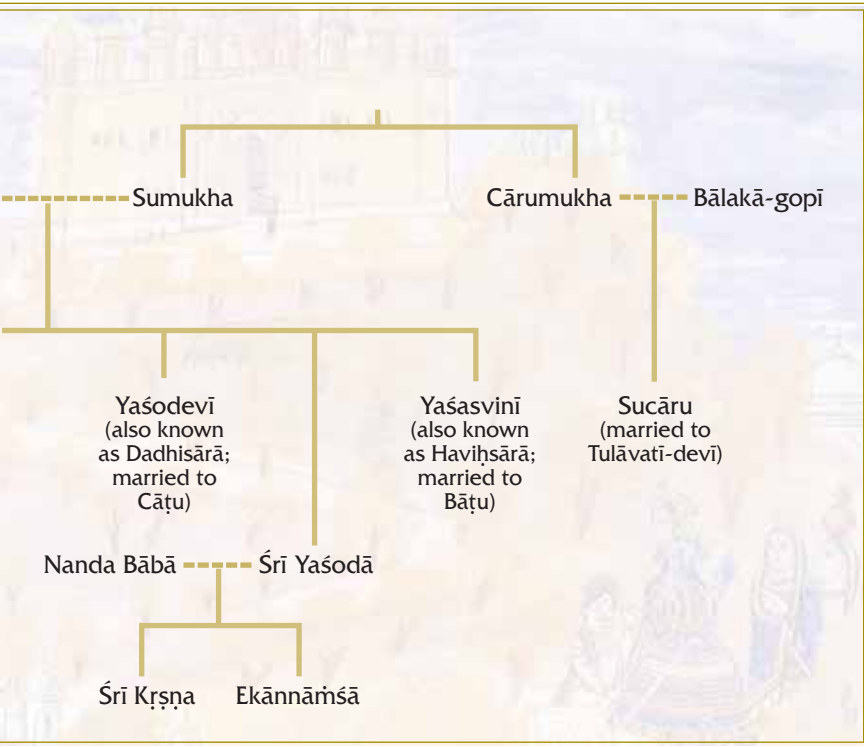
This *kuṇḍa* is also named Ghoṣarānī-kuṇḍa. Ghoṣarānī was Yaśodhara Gopa's daughter. Yaśodhara Gopa gave her hand in marriage here. This is the *kuṇḍa* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's maternal grandmother, Pāṭalā-devī.



Śrī Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's place of bhajana

Near Luk-lukī-kuṇḍa, in a secluded, but naturally beautiful location is Śrī Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's place of *bhajana*. Śrī Prabodhānanda was the spiritual master and paternal uncle of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. He was a transcendental poet, well-versed in all the holy scriptures. *Rādhā-rasa-sudhā-nidhi*, *Śrī Navadvīpa-śataka* and *Śrī Vṛndāvana-śataka* are some of the works of this great personality. In his famous *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpika*, Śrī Kavi Karṇapūra has mentioned that Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī is the very talented Tuṅgavidyā Sakhī, one of the eight main *sakhīs* in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

After Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī heard Śrīman Mahāprabhu speak *kṛṣṇa-kathā* in Śrī Raṅgam, he left the Śrī *sampradāya* to



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become a follower of Mahāprabhu. When Śrīman Mahāprabhu left Śrī Raṅgam, Prabodhānanda came to Vraja and stayed for some time at this secluded place where he performed *bhajana*. In his last days, he came to Kāliya-daha in Vṛndāvana. There he entered his eternal pastimes while performing *bhajana*. Today, one can take *darśana* of his place of *bhajana* and his *samādhi* there.

Phisalanī-śilā

This stone slide (*phisalanī-śilā*) is situated on the Indrasena Hill near Kalāvātā-grāma. While grazing the cows, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* used to slide here. Śrīmatī Rādhikā sometimes used to slide here also, along with Her *sakhīs*. To this day, the boys of the nearby village take great pleasure in sliding down this hill when they graze their cows. Pilgrims also come to take *darśana* of this slide, where these joyful episodes took place.

Vyomāsura's cave

Nearby the slide, in the middle of the hill is the cave of Vyomāsura. Kṛṣṇa killed Vyomāsura here. This cave is also referred to as Medhāvī Muni's cave because Medhāvī Muni worshipped Kṛṣṇa here.

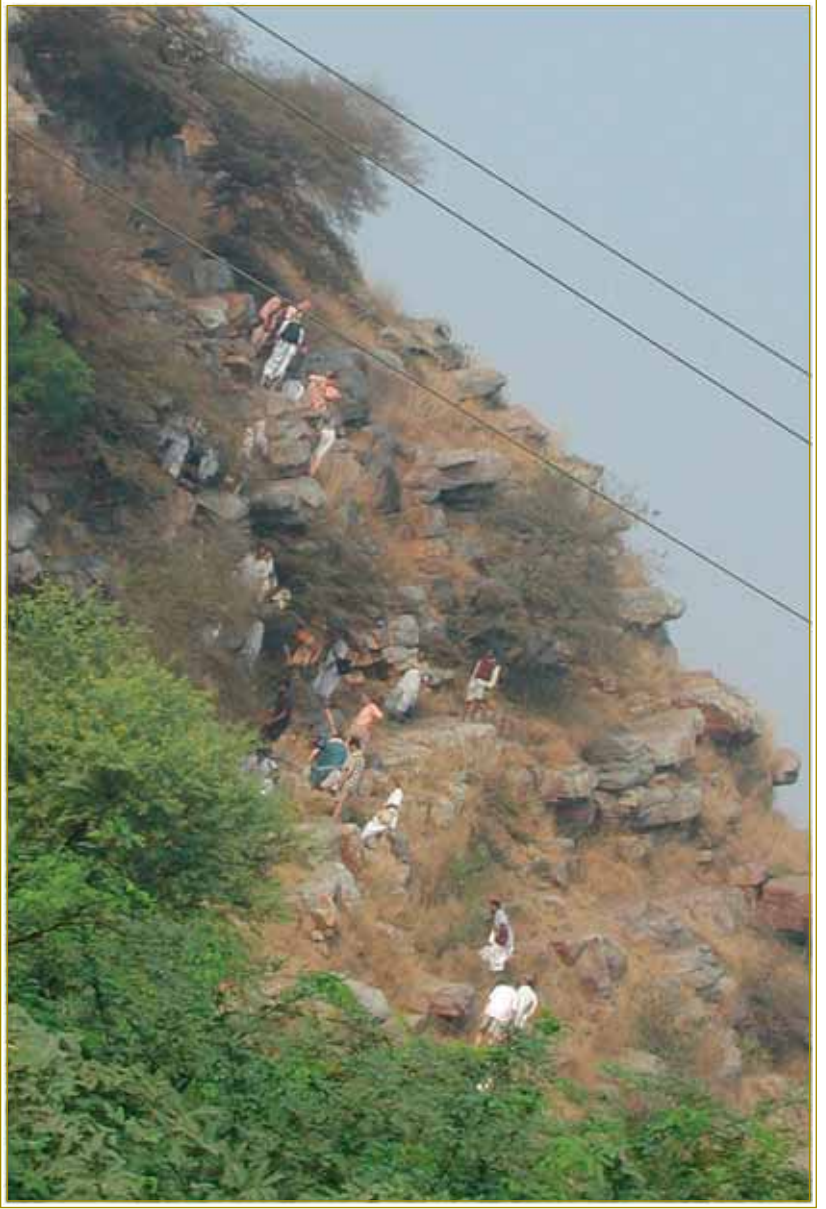
The footprint of Śrī Baladeva Prabhu lies nearby, at the foot of the hill. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa was killing Vyomāsura, the earth began to tremble. Baladeva pressed down on the earth with His foot and thus stabilised it. His footprint can still be seen today.

Once, Kṛṣṇa came to this place while grazing His cows. The forest was filled with green grass, which the cows happily ate. Without any care, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* began to play a game of “cops and robbers”. Many of the *sakhās* pretended to be sheep while others pretended to be their keepers. Still others took on the role of thieves and stole the sheep. Kṛṣṇa played the judge. The owners of the sheep filed a lawsuit with the judge against the thieves. Śrī Kṛṣṇa called both parties before Him and proceeded to



Phisalanī-sīlā

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Vyomāsura's cave



Footprint of Śrī Baladeva Prabhu

consider the case. All the cowherd boys were thus deeply absorbed in their play.

Intending to kill Kṛṣṇa, Vyomāsura, one of Kaṁsa's spies, entered the group disguised as a *sakhā* and became one of the thieves. He stole all the *sakhās* who were playing the part of sheep and hid them in this cave. Śrī Kṛṣṇa looked around and wondered, "Where have all our *sakhās* gone?" Recognising Vyomāsura as a demon in disguise, He understood that this was his work. He therefore caught him and killed him. Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* who were playing the sheep's owners then released the other *sakhās* from the cave in the hill. This pastime has been described in the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.⁴

Bhojana-thālī

Some distance from Vyomāsura's cave is Bhojana-thālī, and near Bhojana-thālī is Kṣīrasāgara, or Kṛṣṇa-kunḍa. After killing Vyomāsura, Śrī Kṛṣṇa bathed in this *kunḍa* and ate here with

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

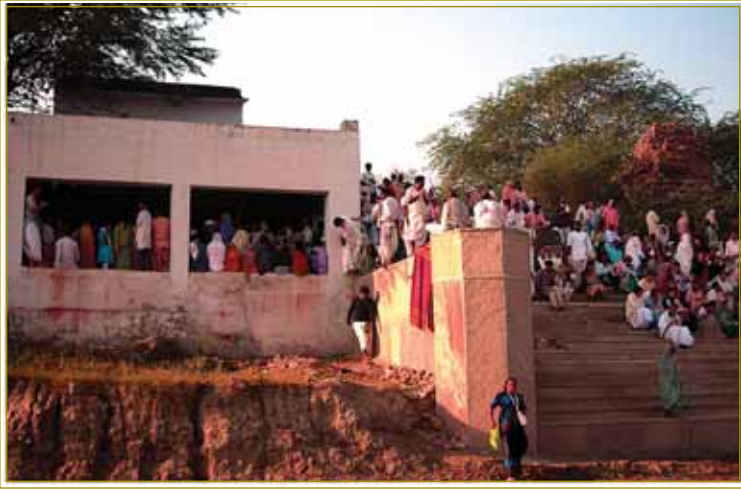
the *gopā sakhās*. The marks of a plate (*thāla*) and of cups are still visible on the hill where they ate (*bhojana kiyā*). The place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa was sitting is also nearby. After eating, Kṛṣṇa played with the *sakhās* on a nearby hill, where they used a stone as a musical instrument. This place can also still be found today. To this day, various sweet sounds can still be produced by playing on this stone, which is known as a *bajanī-śilā*.



Offering at *Bhojana-thālī*



*Plate marks
on the hill
at Bhojana-thālī*



A view of Bhojana-thālī Temple from Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa



The deities at the temple of Śrī Gopināthajī

Nearby is Śāntanu-kuṇḍa, the place where Śāntanu performed austerities. Gupta-gaṅgā, Naimiṣa-tīrtha, Haridvāra-kuṇḍa, Avantikā-kuṇḍa, Matsya-kuṇḍa, Govinda-kuṇḍa, Nṛṣimha-kuṇḍa and Prahlāda-kuṇḍa are also all situated here. On the hill at Bhojana-thālī is the place where Śrī Parasurāma performed austerities and worshipped the Supreme Lord.

Deities of the Śrī Gauḍīya *sampradāya* that are present in Kāmyavana include Śrī Govindajī, Śrī Vṛndā-devī, Śrī Gopinātha and Śrī Madana-mohana. Deities of the Śrī Vallabha *sampradāya* include Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Candramā, Navanīta Priyājī and Śrī Madana-mohana.

The Gates of Kāmyavana

Kāmyavana has seven gates:

- (1) Ḍīg Gate – This gate is situated in the south-eastern part of Kāmyavana. The road here leads to Ḍīg (Dīrghapura) and Bharatpura.
- (2) Laṅkā Gate – This gate is the road to Setubandha-kuṇḍa, which runs south from the village of Kāma.
- (3) Āmera Gate – This gate is the road to Caraṇa-pahāḍī, which runs south-west from the village of Kāma.
- (4) Devī Gate – This gate is the road to Vaiṣṇavī-devī in the Punjāb, which runs west from the village of Kāma.
- (5) Delhi Gate – This gate lies in the north of Kāmyavana, and the road to Delhi runs from here.
- (6) Rāmājī Gate – This gate is situated in the north-eastern side of the village, and the road to Nandagaon runs from here.
- (7) Mathurā Gate – This gate is situated in the east of the village, and the road to Mathurā via Varsānā runs from here.

PASTIME PLACES VISITED AFTER PARIKRAMĀ OF KĀMYAVĀṆA

Dhuleḍā-gaon

Every day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* take the cows out to graze, leaving the barns in the morning and returning in the evening. At that time, dust kicked up by the feet of hundreds and thousands of *sakhās* and by the hooves of countless cows rises like a cloud filling the whole sky. By seeing this dust (*dhūla*), the Vrajavāsīs would at once know that Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* were either going cow grazing or returning home. The village of Dhuleḍā, where the whole sky would become full of this dust, is situated east of Kāmyavana.

Ūdhā

When Uddhava was making his way from Mathurā to Nandagaon to deliver Kṛṣṇa's message, he stopped here to rest for some time. This is why this place received the name Ūdhā.

Āṭora

Śrī Kṛṣṇa happily played here throughout the day and night (eight *praharas*) with His most dear *sakhās*, like Dāma, Śrīdāma, Sudāma, Vasudāma, Stoka-kṛṣṇa, Kokila, Bhṛṅga, Ujjvala, Arjuna, Subala and Madhumaṅgala. The word *āṭora* means "to remain engaged in the pleasure of playing games for all eight *praharas* of the day (*āṭho praharas*)". This place has therefore been named Āṭora.

Bajerā

This village, situated two miles east of Kāmyavana, is the birth-place of the twin sisters Raṅgadevī and Sudevī, who are two of the eight principal *sakhīs* (*aṣṭa-sakhīs*). Their father is Raṅgasāra Gopa and their mother is Karuṇā Gopī. Raṅgadevī's husband is

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Vakrakhana Gopa, and Sudevī's husband is Vakrakhana Gopa's younger brother. Both sisters live in Jāvaṭa with Śrīmatī Rādhikā and always serve Her.

Sunaharā-gaon

This village lies four miles east of Kāmyavana and two miles from Bajerā-gaon. Śrīmatī Rādhikā offered the golden necklace She was wearing to Mahādeva during Her worship of him here. Therefore even today, this village is called Sunaharā or Sunerā, meaning “golden necklace”. This village is also called Sunaharā-gaon because it is established up on the Suvarṇācala Hill.

Kadamba-khaṇḍī

Near Sunaharā-gaon, to the south-west, is a vast grove of *kadamba* trees (a *kadamba-khaṇḍī*). This is the location of a *rāsa-manḍala* and of Ratna-kuṇḍa. In the month of Bhādra on the Caturdaśī of the bright moon, *rāsa-līlā* is enacted here according to *būdhī-līlā*.

Nābhājī's place of *bhajana* is also in the *kadamba-khaṇḍī*. Nābhājī's previous name was Catura-cintāmaṇi, and he was born in Paya-gaon in Vraja. From childhood, he performed *bhajana* in an isolated grove of *kadamba* trees, being detached from the material



Nābhājī

world. He was a great renunciant. It is said that he would remain absorbed in meditation on different pastimes. Once, while being thus absorbed, he began to pick flowers for the service of Priyā-Priyatama (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa). He had very long matted hair, which on this occasion became entangled in a thorny bush. He remained standing in that same position for three days. Kiśora and Kiśorī (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa) appeared there and started disentangling his hair from the bush.

“Who are you?” Nābhājī asked.

Kiśorījī smiled, indicating with Her eyes that Śyāmasundara Himself was disentangling his matted locks. Then, suddenly, They both disappeared. Nābhājī’s life had become blessed. He rolled about on the ground, weeping. He later came to Vṛndāvana to reside at Vihāra-ghāṭa.

Ūñcāgaon

This village, situated three miles east of Sunerā-gaon and one mile west of Varsānā, is the village of Śrī Lalitā. *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa*



Ūñcāgaon



quotes *Viṣṇu-rahasya*, which describes this place as follows: “Nearby is Sakhīgiri-parvata, on which Phisalanī-śilā (a stone slide), Lalitā-vivāha-maṇḍapa (the wedding pavilion of Lalitā) and Sakhī-kūpa are situated. Also nearby are Triveṇī-kūpa, a *rāsa-maṇḍala*, a deity of Dāūjī in a *kuñja* of thorny bushes, Gopī-puṣkariṇī, Deha-kuṇḍa, and other pastime places.”⁵

- **Sakhīgiri-parvata**

Lalitā and other *sakhīs*, being attracted and enamoured by Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s qualities as a hero, such as *dhīra-lalita*, enjoyed *rāsa* and various other pastimes with Him around and on top of this hill.⁶



The Phisalanī-sīlā (top) and a citra-sīlā (lower) on Sakhigiri-parvata (left)

- **Phisalanī-sīlā**

This stone slide is situated on Sakhigiri-parvata, and is adjacent to Lalitā-vivāha-sthala. Lalitā and other *sakhīs* used to slide here. Even today, one can see the mark of the slide on the hill, as well as the markings of red lac (*altā*) from the *gopīs*' feet. Nearby, on the northern part of the hilltop, are some astonishing *sīlās* that appear multicoloured when the sun's rays shine on them. The *gopīs* would also paint wonderful pictures (*citra*) on these *sīlās*, and therefore these *sīlās* are called *citra-sīlās*. One who faithfully searches and prays on this hilltop can sometimes even see the *gopīs*' footprints there.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

• Lalitā-vivāha-maṇḍapa

This is Lalitā's wedding pavilion. The *gopīs* performed Lalitā's wedding ceremony with seven-year-old Śrī Kṛṣṇa here. One day, Lalitā and the *sakhīs* were sitting with *rasika* Kṛṣṇa and talking sweetly with Him. Upon the indication of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Viśākhā and some other *sakhīs* tied Śrī Śyāmasundara's yellow cloth to the corner of Śrī Lalitā's veil. Raṅgadevī and other *sakhīs* started to sing wedding songs while Tuṅgavidyā and others uttered the wedding *mantras*. The remaining *sakhīs* showered flowers on Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Lalitā. Becoming somewhat suspicious, Lalitā quickly stood up and went to run away, but she was unable to do so because of the knot. The *gopīs* surrounded the couple and with great celebration held a big festival. This place was named Lalitā-vivāha-sthala after this pastime.



Lalitā-vivāha-maṇḍapa

• **Gopī-puṣkariṇī**

This lake is situated at Sakhīgiri-parvata. Lalitā and other *sakhīs* used to play many kinds of water sports while bathing in this lake. It is rare even for the demigods to come to this place. Once, while playing here, the *sakhīs* collected *badrī* fruit and arranged them in the form of a mortar (*okhal*). This place is still famous by the name Badrī-kā-okhal.

• **Sakhī-kūpa**

This place lies near Sakhīgiri-parvata. Once, Lalitā and the other *sakhīs* were eagerly awaiting Kṛṣṇa's arrival. Having remained restless for a long time, they were thirsty. They therefore dug a well (*kūpa*) with their own hands. Just as they began to drink its water, Kṛṣṇa arrived, dressed in splendid attire. An astonishing exchange then took place between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, in which the *gopīs'* mysterious words fully satisfied Him. This well is called Sakhī-kūpa because it was built by the *sakhīs*.

• **Trivenī-kūpa**

This well is situated some distance away on the right side of the path that goes from Sakhīgiri-parvata to Ūñcāgaon. Śrī Dāūjī and Lalitā daily bathed in Trivenī-kūpa. Once, in the month of Māgha (January–February), Lalitā and the other *sakhīs* desired to bathe at Trivenī, which is the confluence of the Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī Rivers. Śrī Kṛṣṇa therefore created this well for them with the tip of His flute, right before their eyes. Merely by His remembering them, the holy waters from the confluence at Trivenī appeared in the well, and the *gopīs* could bathe. A person easily attains the fruit of bathing in Trivenī simply by putting the dust surrounding the well on his head, what to speak of actually bathing in the water of this well.

• Dāūjī Temple

A large deity of Dāūjī resides nearby, to the east of Trivenī-kūpa, in the middle of dense thorny *hīṅsa* bushes. This temple was built by Rājā Ṭoḍaramala on the order of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa was a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*. He took birth in the state of Madhurāpattana in South India. His father, Śrī Bhaṭṭajī of the Bhaṭṭabhāskara Tailaṅga *brāhmaṇa-paraṃparā* of that place, was famous for his erudition. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa became detached from the material world at the age of fourteen and came to Vraja around 1546 AD. He was especially dedicated to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. It is well known that the present deity in the Śrījī Temple in Varsānā manifested as a result of the special prayers of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa. These deities manifested on the second day of the bright moon in the month of Āṣāḍha (July) in 1570 AD.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa had undivided faith in Vraja. In his famous work, *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa*, he describes all the pastime places of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja in great detail. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa inaugurated the enactment of *rāsa-lilā*, which is still being carried out today. The priests and *brāhmaṇas* of the Śrījī Temple, Varsānā, take initiation from the descendants of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. Bhaṭṭajī's main engagement was serving in the Dāūjī Temple in Ūñcāgaon.



Dāūjī Temple

• Lalitā-sthala (Aṭorā-parvata)

This hill is situated east of Deha-kuṇḍa, and adjacent to and west of the Dāūjī Temple. Ūñcāgaon is established on this hill, and there one will find the balcony (*aṭārī*) of Lalitājī and other places of her childhood pastimes.⁷

Lalitā Sakhī's parents are Viśobha Gopa and Śāradī Gopī. She was married in Jāvaṭa; her husband is Bhairoṇ Gopa. Lalitā is the foremost of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's *aṣṭa-sakhīs* and the main leader of Her three groups of *sakhīs*, maidservants (*dāsīs*) and messengers (*dūtīs*).

Lalitā is also known as Anurādhā because she possesses all the moods and qualities of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Her nature is leftist and harsh (*vāmā-prakharā*) and she is expert in all varieties of services to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, such as dressing, decorating, performing magic, making Their bed, and arranging meetings between Them. Even Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī Rādhikā Themselves cannot overrule her.



Lalitā-sthala



• Deha-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* is situated to the west just below Lalitā-sthala. Once, Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa together with the *sakhīs* were bathing here during a festival. As they were dressing themselves after bathing, a poor *brāhmaṇa* came there and in a piteous voice



Deba-kunḍa

addressed Śrī Kṛṣṇa, “I have a daughter of marriageable age, but due to lack of money, I cannot offer her to a suitable husband. Therefore, please give me some wealth.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa thought, “Rādhā is My only and entire wealth. But for Her, I possess nothing else of value.” So He told the *brāhmaṇa*, “I want to give you My entire fortune, not just a little money.” He then pointed towards Śrī Rādhā and said, “She is My entire property and wealth. Please accept Her.”

When the poor *brāhmaṇa* heard this, he began to beat his head in sadness. He said, “O Vrajeśa-nandana, I could not even arrange a suitable husband for my one daughter; how will I ever be able to marry off two? This is disastrous for me. What should I do now?” The *brāhmaṇa* only wanted gold. Understanding this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa put Priyājī on one side of a scale and Her weight in gold on the other. He then gave all this gold to the *brāhmaṇa*. Śrīmatījī also became pleased with this arrangement, which relieved Her of much trouble. The *brāhmaṇa* was given an abundance of gold and very happily returned to his home, where he completed the marriage of his daughter with a grand celebration.

It is also said that once a wealthy person was suffering severely from leprosy. He came here, bathed in this *kuṇḍa*, and donated ten *karṣa* (160 grams) of gold to qualified *brāhmaṇas*. After some time, his disease left him.

• **Veṇīśaṅkara Mahādeva**

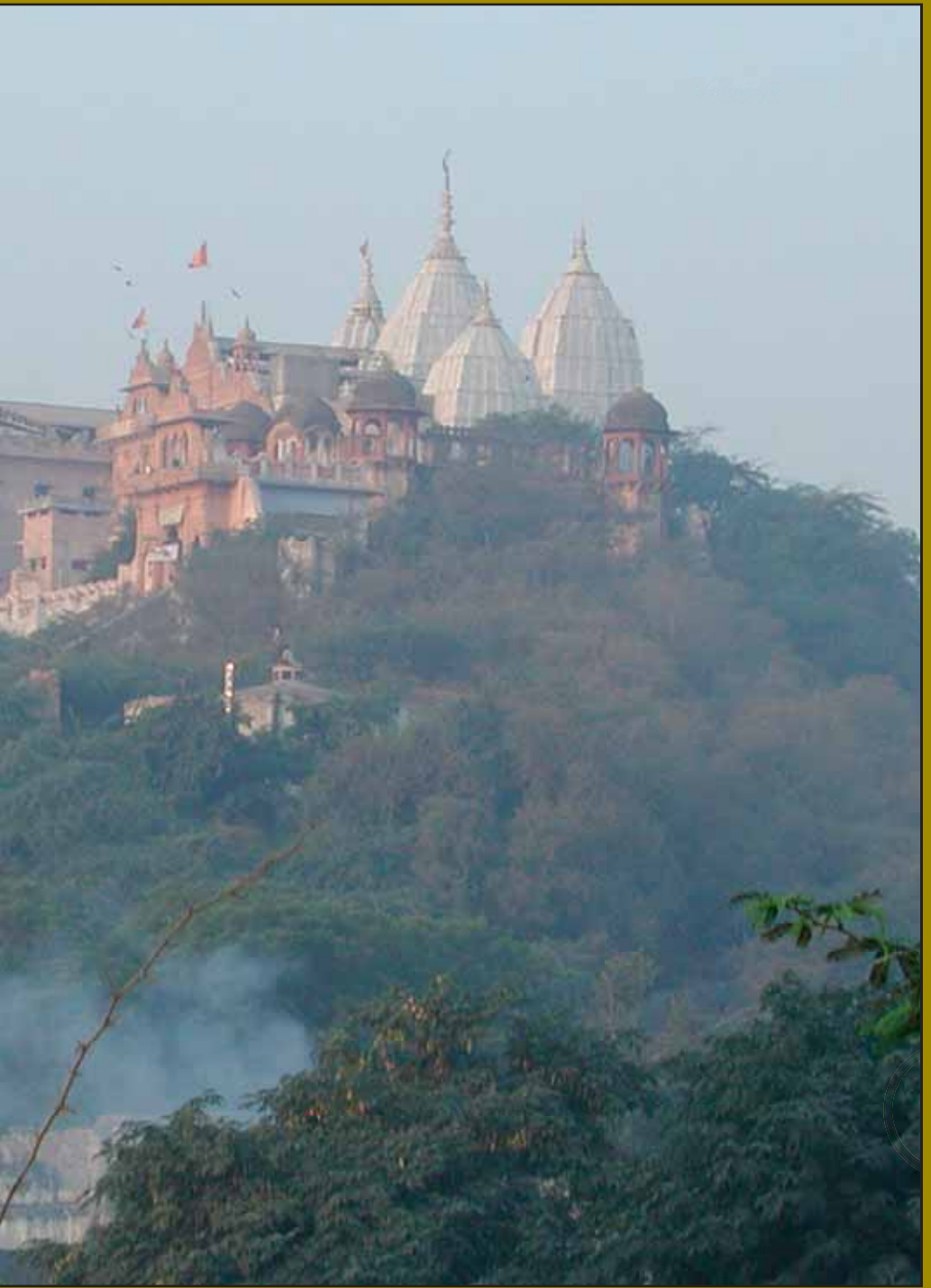
On the bank of Deha-kuṇḍa is Veṇīśaṅkara Mahādeva, whom the *gopīs* installed with their own hands. He who bathes in this *kuṇḍa* with faith and takes *darśana* of Veṇīśaṅkara Mahādeva gets the same result as that of bathing in the confluence at Trivenī. All his problems are eliminated and he attains pure *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa.



Endnotes

- 1 *caturtha kāmyakavanam
vanānām vanam-uttamam
tatra gatvā naro devi!
mama loke mahiyate*
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- 2 *tataḥ kāmyavanam rājan!
yatra bālye sthito bhavān
snāna-mātreṇa sarveṣām
sarva-kāma phala-pradam*
Skanda Purāṇa
- 3 *Pratibhū* means “to be equal to”. A *pratibhū-vigraha* is a deity that is considered non-different from the original deity it replaces.
- 4 Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.37.26–33).
- 5 *sakhi-giri-parvato'sti tat-pārśve skhalinī
śilā-mandiram, tatraiva lalitā-vivāha-
sthalam tat-parvatasya dakṣiṇa-pārśve
triveṇī-tīrthaḥ, tan-madhye rāsa-
maṇḍalam tat-pārśve sakhi-kūpaṁ,
tad-uttara-pārśve śilā-ṣṛṣṭha-sthaḥ śrī-
yugala-baladeva-mūrtiḥ himsa-vrksād
adha-sthaḥ.*
- 6 *yatra gopa-sutāḥ sarvāḥ
lalitādi-prabhṛtayaḥ
krīḍāṁ cakruḥ samāsena
śrī-kṛṣṇa-guṇa-moditāḥ
yasmāt sakhīgīrīr nāma
babhūva vraja-maṇḍale
tat-pārśve skhalinī khyātā
kṛṣṇa-krīḍāśilā sthitā*
Viṣṇu-rahasya
- 7 *grāma-madhye tvaṭā tv asti
lalitāyās tu khelanam
tasmin-naṭyāṁ lalitā
sāṣṭābhiḥ sakhibhiḥ saha
aṣṭābda-saṁyutāvasthā
sakhibhiḥ parikrīḍate
tasmād uccābhidhānasya
aṭori-sañjñāṁ pravakṣate*
Bṛhad-gautamiya Tantra







*“Varsānā is the pastime
place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s
beloved Śrīmatī Rādhikā.*

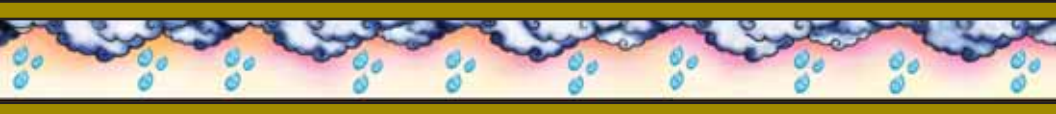
*Lying at the heart of
this village is a multitude
of the Divine Couple’s
sweet and secret amorous
pastimes, together with
Their transcendental moods
and desires. ”*





Varsāṇā

(Vṛsabhāṇupura)







arsānā is the pastime place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beloved Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Lying at the heart of this village is a multitude of the Divine Couple's sweet and secret amorous pastimes, together with Their transcendental moods and desires. The Vaiṣṇava community reveres Varsānā. This venerable land with its lakes, ponds, gardens and forests – such as Gahvaravana, Sāṅkari-khor and other pastime places – reminds one of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's different pastimes. In Vraja, the grass, small shrubs, creepers, trees, animals, birds, insects, snakes and so forth are all composed of *sac-cid-ānanda*; or eternity, spiritual consciousness and full transcendental bliss. They assist Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Their pastimes, and are very dear to Them. It is said in the scriptures that even eminent realised souls, like Brahmā and Śaṅkara, repeatedly pray to attain a birth like theirs so that they too may be able to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

ŚRĪ VRAJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

For instance, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says in Śrī Vraja-vilāsa-stava (verse 102):

*yat kiñcit tṛṇa-gulma-kīkaṭa-mukhaṁ goṣṭhe samasta hi tat
sarvānandamaya mukunda-dayitaṁ līlānukūlam param
śāstrair eva muhur muhuḥ sphuṭam idaṁ niṣṭāṅkitaṁ yāñcayā
brahmāder api sa-sphṛhena tad idaṁ mayā vandyate*

“All the grass, shrubs, insects and other creatures found in Vraja are very dear to He who is the very embodiment of all transcendental bliss, Śrī Mukunda, and they assist in His pastimes. All the scriptures have repeatedly established this fact, and devotees ranging from Brahmā to Uddhava have expressed a desire to take birth in Vraja amongst these species. For these reasons, I worship all the creatures who reside in Vraja.”

Varsānā’s original name is Vṛṣabhānupura. Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, the father of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, lived here with his family. Varsānā is situated fourteen miles west of Govardhana and six miles east of Kāmyavana. According to the *Varāha* and *Padma Purāṇas*, Brahmā pleased Śrī Hari at the end of Satya-yuga by performing arduous worship. Brahmā then asked for the following boon: “Please perform Your sweet pastimes with the *vraja-gopīs* on my very form and allow me to behold these *līlās*. Please make my life blessed, by especially performing swing pastimes in the rainy season and by performing Holī in spring.”¹

Pleased with Brahmā, Śrī Hari instructed him, “Go to Vṛṣabhānupura and take the form of a hill there. In that form you will be able to behold all Our sweet pastimes.”²

And so it happened that Brahmā assumed the form of a hill at this place in Vraja and fulfilled his cherished desire.

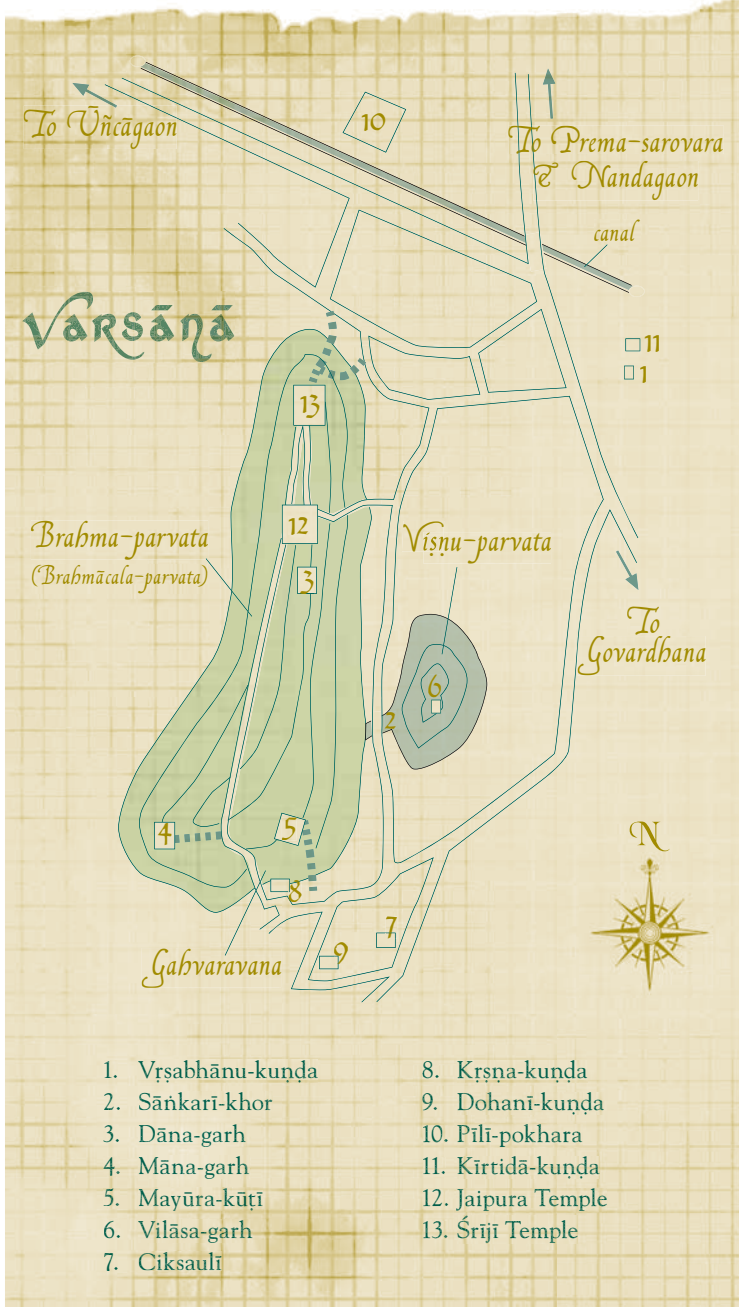


PASTIME PLACES IN THE AREA OF VARSĀṆĀ

The parikramā of Varsāṇā is four miles long. *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa*, quoting *Padma Purāṇa*³, describes the characteristics of Vṛṣabhānupura as follows: “According to the *Padma Purāṇa*, two hills face each other here – one is Viṣṇu-parvata and the other is Brahma-parvata. Viṣṇu-parvata is on the left and Brahma-parvata is on the right. On top of Brahma-parvata is a temple of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Close by to the north, on the lower side of this hill, is the palace of Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu, where one can have *darśana* of Śrī Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, Śrīmatī Kīrtidā Mahārānī, Śrīdāma and Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Nearby is a temple of Śrī Lalitā, in which one can have *darśana* of Rādhikā along with nine *sakhīs*.

“Also on top of Brahma-parvata are Dāna Mandira, the place of a swing (*hiṅḍolā*), Mayūra-kuṭī, a *rāsa-maṅḍala* and a temple of Śrīmatī Rādhā. Further on between the two hills is Sāṅkarī-khor. Near Sāṅkarī-khor is Vilāsa Mandira, and next to Vilāsa Mandira is Gahvaravana. Within Gahvaravana are Rādhā-sarovara and

ŚRĪ VṚJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



a *rāsa-maṇḍala*, and nearby is Dohanī-kuṇḍa. Very close to this *kuṇḍa* is Mayūra-sarovara, which was constructed by Citralekhā.” Bhānu-sarovara is also nearby, and on its bank is Vrajeśvara, a deity of Mahārūdra. On its left side is Kīrti-sarovara.

There are four *sarovaras*, or ponds, around Varsānā: (1) Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa in the east, (2) Kīrtidā-kuṇḍa in the north-east, (3) Vihāra-kuṇḍa (later named Tilaka-kuṇḍa) in the south-west, and (4) Dohanī-kuṇḍa in the south, south-west of the village of Ciksaulī.

Sāṅkarī-khor lies north of Ciksaulī, and on Viṣṇu-parvata, east of Sāṅkarī-khor, is Vilāsa-garh. This is the location of a *rāsa-maṇḍala*. Near Vilāsa Mandira is where Rādhikā, as a child, played with the sand, building palaces and so on. West of Sāṅkarī-khor, on top of the mountain, is Dāna-garh; and south-west of Sāṅkarī-khor and west of the village of Ciksaulī are Gahvaravana and Gahvara-kuṇḍa. Mayūra-kuṭī is to the right when entering Gahvaravana. On the top of the hill, south-west of Gahvaravana, are Māna-garh and Māna Mandira; and below and nearby is the village of Mānapurā. North of Māna-garh is the temple of the Mahārāja of Jaipura, and north of that temple is Śrījī Temple.

Just below Śrījī Temple, still on the hill, one comes to the temple of Brahmājī and the palace of Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s paternal grandfather, Mahībhānu. Below that lies the village of Varsānā. West of Varsānā is Muktā-kuṇḍa, or Ratna-kuṇḍa.

Among the places listed above, we will describe those where prominent pastimes took place.

Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa

Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa is situated east of the village of Varsānā. Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu bathed in this *kuṇḍa* every morning. He would also chant his daily *mantras* and perform other morning duties here. It has been described that in a different era Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu found Rādhikā in this *kuṇḍa* while bathing. She was a newly-born baby girl playing on a lotus flower in the water.

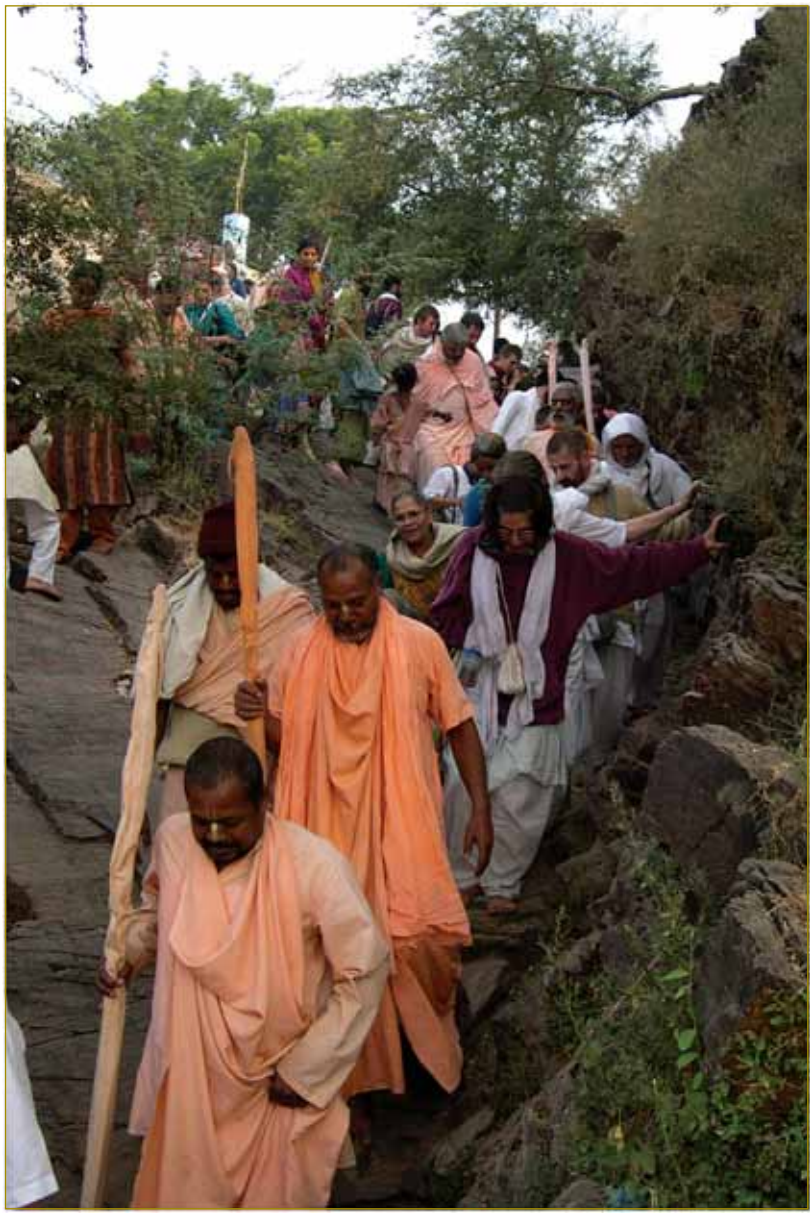


Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa

This charming *kuṇḍa* is surrounded on all sides by *jiyala* trees. Sometimes, Śrīmatī Rādhikā would bathe here and enjoy water sports together with Her *sakhīs*. *Rasika* Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa would also bathe here, but at another *ghāṭa*. He would then dive under the water, catch hold of the *gopīs'* feet, and again emerge on His side of the pond. Sometimes, Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa would also sport with these *gopīs* in the water and also play hide and seek. This *kuṇḍa* is named after Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu.

Sāṅkarī-khor

This narrow passage-way lies between Brahma-parvata and Viṣṇu-parvata, and both *gopas* and *gopīs* would make their way along it. After milking the cows, the *gopas* would carry the milk on *kāmvars*, which is a bamboo stick with ropes attached to each end for carrying loads. They used this pathway to cross from one side of the hills to the other. Frolicsome Kṛṣṇa would plunder the milk, yoghurt and butter of the jovial *gopīs* here. Every year in the month of Bhādra on Śuklā-trayodaśī (the thirteenth day of the bright moon), *būdhī-līlā*⁴ is enacted here, as inaugurated



Sāṅkarī-khor

by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa. Today this pastime is also enacted here annually on the occasion of Rādhāṣṭamī, the appearance day of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

At this *dāna-ghāṭī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His *gopa* friends would become tax collectors and demand milk, yoghurt and butter as toll-tax from the *gopīs*. When the *gopīs* refused to give any tax, Kṛṣṇa would forcibly plunder and relish their milk products.

The *gopīs*, being tired of these daily encounters, decided one day to retaliate strongly. They decided that on a chosen day they would all hide in the caves and dense *kuñjas* on the hill on both sides of the narrow pathway. A few *gopīs* would then cross Sāṅkarī-khor carrying pots of milk, yoghurt and butter on their heads. The plan was that the moment Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* would stop them and try to plunder their load, the *gopīs* would call out to their friends hiding nearby, who would at once descend from their hideouts. Then, under the leadership of Lalitā, they would teach Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* a good lesson.

And so it happened that the next day thousands and thousands of *gopīs* divided into groups and hid themselves in the dense *kuñjas* and large caves around Sāṅkarī-khor. Then, as usual, a few *gopīs* placed pots of milk and yoghurt on their heads and made their way towards Sāṅkarī-khor. Kṛṣṇa, Madhumaṅgala and the other *sakhās* obstructed their path and forcibly began to plunder their milk and yoghurt. At once, these *gopīs* signalled the *gopīs* who were hiding, and a wonderful pastime took place. Five to ten *gopīs* forcefully caught hold of Kṛṣṇa. Another five to ten caught hold of Madhumaṅgala, and further groups captured Subala, Arjuna, Lavaṅga and the other *sakhās*. They slapped their cheeks till they were swollen. They then tied the tuft of hair on the back of their heads (*śikhās*) to the branches of the trees and asked them, “What pleasure is there in plundering our yoghurt? Will you ever do it again?” Madhumaṅgala folded his hands and prayed at the feet of Lalitā. “Please spare me. I was very hungry. I am a simple *brāhmaṇa* boy who fell under the influence of that fickle Kṛṣṇa.

I shall never behave like this again.” The *gopīs* thus taught the *sakhās* a lesson.

Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Viśākhā and some other *gopīs* had captured Kṛṣṇa. They slapped His cheeks a few times and then forcibly dressed Him like a woman with a blouse and skirt. They even put vermilion in the parting of His hair, bangles on His arms, anklets on His feet, and so on. They covered half His face with a veil, placed a pot of yoghurt on His head and began to make fun of Him by demanding tax on the yoghurt. From the top of the hill, Lalitā Sakhī aimed a stone at the pot of yoghurt on Kṛṣṇa’s head, breaking it and drenching His whole body. All the *sakhīs* began to laugh and clap, and Śyāma felt very ashamed. “Will You dare to demand tax on our yoghurt ever again?” they asked. “Hold Your ears and vow, ‘From today, I will never try to tax the *gopīs*’ yoghurt.’” They forced Kṛṣṇa to repeat this.

Dāna-garh

This beautiful place is on top of Brahmācala-parvata (Brahma-parvata). One day, *rasika* Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Subala Sakhā were sitting here as tax collectors, eagerly awaiting the arrival of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her friends, who were to pass this way carrying various articles of worship on the pretext of going to worship the Sungod. Upon seeing Her, Śrī Kṛṣṇa obstructed Her path and rebuked Her, saying, “Who are You? And where are You going?”

Śrīmatī Rādhikā answered, “Don’t You know who we are?” and She fearlessly continued forward.

Kṛṣṇa and Subala Sakhā again obstructed Her way. Kṛṣṇa said, “Don’t You know that I have been appointed by the king of this state to collect taxes here? You cannot pass without paying tax. Every day, You carelessly strut through here carrying a variety of valuable items, and You never pay tax. Halt! Pay the tax and then You may pass.”

Viśākhā then spoke in a stern voice: “This is Rādhikā’s kingdom. Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Śrīmatī Rādhikā is Vṛndāvaneśvarī, not



Dāna-garh

anyone else. How have You become the tax collector here without receiving Her permission? Your offence is inexcusable and for it, You must suffer.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, “Don’t talk so impudently. Kandarpadeva (Cupid) is the king of this place. Every day you come and go through here, secretly carrying various expensive items, but you never pay any tax. This has angered Mahārāja Kandarpa, who has sent Me here. If you refuse to pay tax, then I will arrest you all and bring

you before the king. You will have to suffer whatever punishment he hands down to you.”

Hearing Kṛṣṇa’s words, Viśākhā replied, “What can Your king do? Our queen is Vṛndāvaneśvarī, the queen of Vṛndāvana. In Her presence we fear no one. We are well acquainted with the prowess of Your king, whose pride is shattered to pieces by the arrow-like side-long glances of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.” Having said this, all the *sakhīs* moved forward, keeping Śrīmatī Rādhikā up front.

Kṛṣṇa stepped forward and stood in the middle of the narrow path of Sāṅkarī-khor. “O impertinent women of Vraja, you fearlessly cross this place daily, hiding various kinds of jewels. Today, without fail, you must pay the tax on these jewels.”

After such joking words and much laughter, Kīśora-Kīśorī enjoyed various amorous pastimes in a solitary grove, and all the *sakhīs* became filled with bliss. The temple here is called Dāna Mandira.

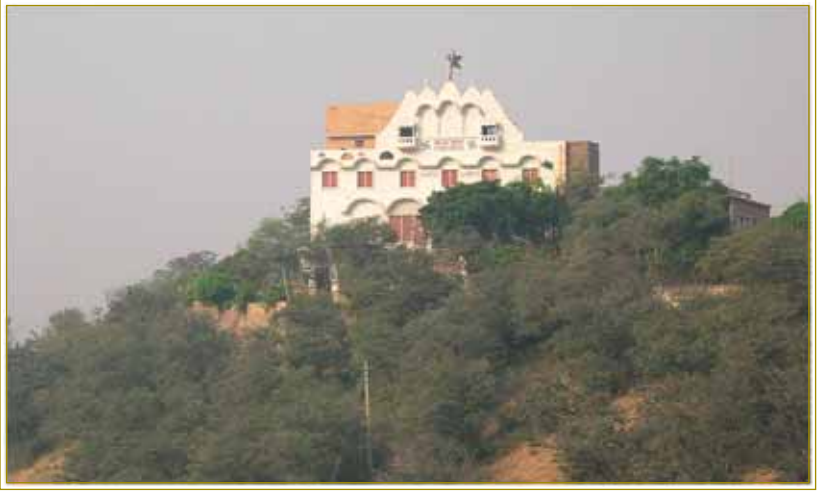
*dānaveśadharā yaiva dadhyupāsyaḥhilāṣiṇe
rādhānirbhatsitā yaiva kṛṣṇāya satataṁ namaḥ*

Brahma Purāṇa

Māna-garh

Māna-garh is a very attractive place on top of Brahmācala-parvata. Śrīmatī Rādhikā displayed *māna*, or a sulky mood, here, but *rasika* Kṛṣṇa very skilfully broke it.

One day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa sent a message to Śrīmatī Rādhikā through Subala, who is one of His *priya-narma-sakhās*, and through Vṛndādevī that They should meet at a certain time. Kṛṣṇa was on His way when He suddenly met Padmā, Candrāvalī’s friend. Padmā described Śrīmatī Candrāvalī’s state of separation from Him and repeatedly requested Him to meet with her. Śrī Kṛṣṇa could not ignore her plea, and went to Candrāvalī’s *kuñja* for what He intended to be a short time. However, He became so absorbed in sweet talks and playful pastimes with Candrāvalī that He forgot everything else, and the time for the arranged meeting with



Māna-garh

Śrīmatī Rādhikā elapsed. Meanwhile, one of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's well-trained female parrots (*sārīs*) arrived on a tree in the same *kuñja*. The parrot returned to Śrīmatī Rādhikā and told Her all the details of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Candrāvalī's sweet conversations and playful pastimes. Rādhikā became deeply distressed and went into a *māna* that was very difficult to break. Within Her heart, She firmly resolved that She had no need for such an insolent Kṛṣṇa; so when Śrī Kṛṣṇa finally arrived, long after the appointed meeting time, Śrīmatī turned Her face away from Him.

Seeing Her unwavering *māna*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tried to appease Her through all kinds of means and tricks, but Her *māna* would not break. Becoming hopeless and feeling sad, Kṛṣṇa left that place. On the road He met Viśākhā, who advised Him to disguise Himself as a new *sakhī* playing a *vīṇa*. He went to Śrīmatī Rādhikā together with Viśākhā, who introduced this new *sakhī* as Śyāmā Sakhī. Viśākhā profusely praised Śyāmā Sakhī's ability to play the *vīṇa* and sing, as well as all Her other skills. Śrīmatī Rādhikā seated this new *sakhī* next to Her with great honour and respect. Upon hearing Her exceptional singing, She became filled with delight and

embraced Her. Śrīmatī Rādhikā recognised Her beloved merely by His touch; and as soon as She had done so, Her *māna* was broken. Surrounded by Her friends, She now became absorbed in beautiful pastimes with the beloved of Her life.

*deva gandharva ramyāya rādhā māna-bidhāyine
māna-mandira sañjñāya namaste ratna-bhūmaye*

Ādi-varāha Purāṇa

In Māna-garh, one can also have *darśana* of Māna Mandira, a swing, a *rāsa-maṇḍala* and Ratnākara-sarovara. Just near Māna-garh to the south is the village of Mānapurā, which reminds one of all these pastimes.

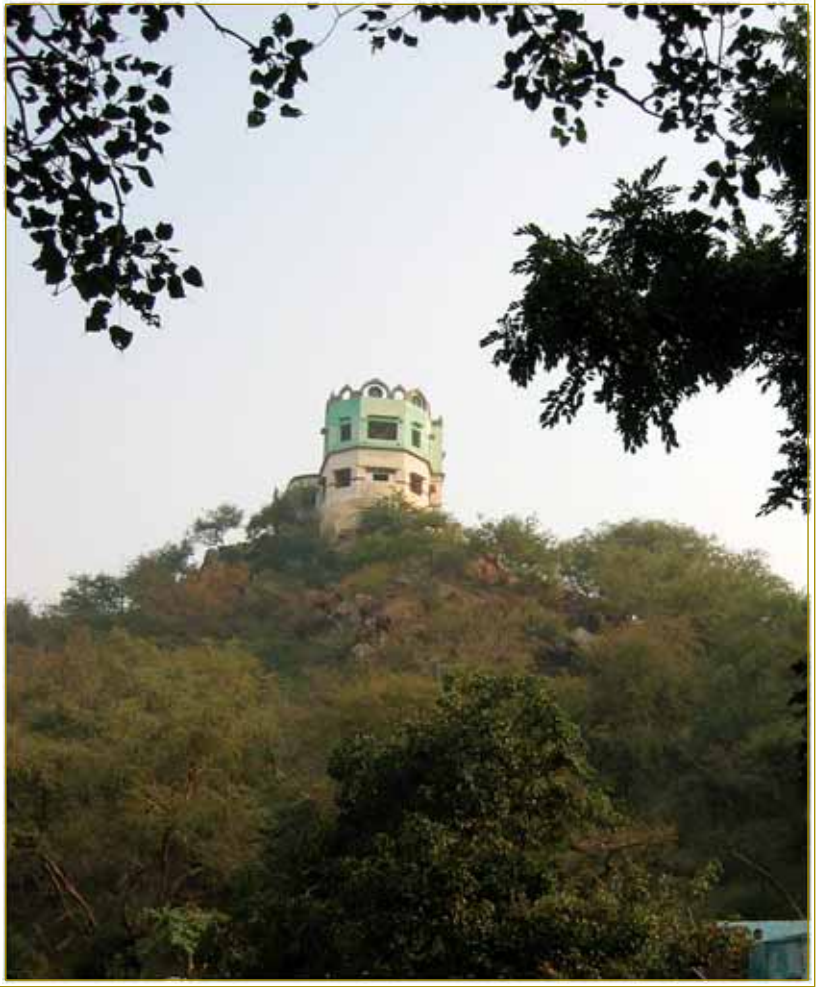
Mayūra-kūṭī

Mayūra-kūṭī is situated on the top of Brahmācala-parvata. Here, one can have *darśana* of the *rāsa-maṇḍala* where Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa danced in the form of a peacock (*mayūra*) and peahen.

Once, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa came to this place together with the *sakhīs*. Upon seeing them, the peacocks became overjoyed with ecstasy and began to dance. Clouds gathered in the sky, and a light shower of rain fell. Nature had decorated herself fully, as if she was a beautiful and charming young woman. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa could not check Their feelings. Taking the form of a peacock and peahen, They danced in an astonishing way along with the circle of peacocks and peahens. All the *sakhīs* were astounded to see Their skilful dancing. They began to sing different kinds of *rāgas*, like *malhāra*, which increased Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pleasure.

*kirīṭine namastubhyaṁ mayūra priya-vallabha
suramyāyai mahākuṭyāi śikhaṇḍi padaveśmane
namaḥ sakhī sametāya rādhā-kṛṣṇāya te namaḥ
vimalotsava devāya vraja-maṅgala-hetave*

Ādi-varāha Purāṇa



Mayūra-kūṭī

Vilāsa-garh

This place is situated on Viṣṇu-parvata. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed many playful pastimes (*vilāsa*) here. Nearby is where Śrī Rādhā used to play in the dust together with Her *sakhīs*.

One day, when Rādhikā was a child, She was playing in the dust with Her *sakhīs* when mischievous Kṛṣṇa suddenly arrived.



Vilāsa-garh atop Viṣṇu-parvata

The *sakhīs* forbade Him to come inside the *kuñja*, but why would Śrī Kṛṣṇa obey them? He entered by force. At that moment, a dust-storm fell upon them by providence, and the entire sky became covered with dust. Nothing could be seen anywhere, and the *sakhīs* fearfully covered their eyes with their hands. Kṛṣṇa took this opportunity to embrace the youthful Rādhikā and kiss Her face. This pastime took place at the time of *vayaḥ-sandhi*, or the period between childhood and youth. Today, Vilāsa Mandira is situated where this pastime took place.

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* states:

*vilāsa rūpiṇe tubhyaṁ namaḥ kṛṣṇāya te namaḥ
sakhīvarga sukhāptāya krīḍā-vimala darśine*

“I offer my obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of He who plays lovely pastimes. He performs these pastimes simply to give pleasure to the *sakhīs*.”

Ciksauli

Ciksauli is situated below Brahmācala-parvata and between Sankarī-khor and Gahvaravana. It is the birthplace of Citrā Sakhī, one of the eight main *sakhīs*. Citrā Sakhī's parents are Catura Gopa and Carcitā Gopī. She is married to Pīṭhara Gopa in Jāvaṭa. She is very expert at decorating and dressing Śrīmatī Rādhikā in a variety of wonderful dresses and ornaments. She is also skilled in many arts, such as painting and understanding the language of animals and birds.

Once, Rādhikā, the young daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, was playing here with Her girlfriends when She heard the very sweet and alluring sound of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute in the distance. She became so enchanted by that sound that She offered Her mind, body and everything to the person playing this sweet flute, and became desirous to meet Him. Rādhikā then saw an amazingly beautiful painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that Citrā Sakhī had made. She forgot all else and offered Her everything to this astonishingly beautiful person.



Ciksaulī Village

At this time, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* were leaving to herd the cows. Upon seeing His supremely heart-stealing threefold-bending form (*tribhaṅga-lalita*), Rādhā could not control Her feelings and offered Herself to this handsome young man. Meanwhile Śrī Kṛṣṇa wandered off into the distance to graze His cows.

Now in a state of great restlessness, Śrīmatījī began to relate what was on Her mind to Her *sakhīs*. She told Lalitā, “O *sakhī*, I do not want to remain alive for a moment longer. Honourable women dedicate their hearts to one man only. When a young girl is engaged to someone, she considers him to be her husband and thinks of no one else. But today, I have become attached to three men – the flute player, the young man in Citrā’s painting and the beautiful young man taking the cows out to graze. My righteous conduct has been destroyed. What is the use of My remaining alive now?”

Hearing this, Śrī Lalitā burst into peels of laughter and said, “O bewildered one, there is no need for You to die. These three are not different people; they are one and the same person. The man playing the sweet flute is none other than Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is also the one in the painting and the one who went cow herding, so what need is there for You to give up Your life?”

Gahvaravana

Gahvara means “deep”, “dense”, “inaccessible” and “secret”. True to its name, this place is a dense forest thick with trees, creepers, groves (*keli-kuñjas*) and Priyā-Priyatama’s sweet and intimate pastimes. It is shaped like a conch. Situated here is a sitting-place (*baiṭhaka*) of Vallabhācārya, where he recited *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Rādhā-sarovara and a *rāsa-maṇḍala*. Here, one can also see the places where many *bhaktas* performed their *bhajana*.

*gahvarākhyāya ramyāya kṛṣṇa-līlā vidhāyine
goṣṭi-ramaṇa saukhyāya vanāya ca namo namaḥ*

Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa



Gahvaravana parikramā path

One famous devotee, Nāgarī Dāsa, has described the pastimes of this place in his songs. For instance, the following pastime took place here one day, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa was out grazing the cows with His *sakhās*:

*caksaulike canā curāye
gārī de daurī rakhvārīn gvārīn sahit gupāl bhagaye
hare būṭ dābe baglin meim svās bhare van gahvar āye
kahat āture bol lol dṛg haṁsat-haṁsat sab baran caḍhāye
hare cabāt, koū horā kari, van kī līlā lāl lubhāye
nāgarīyā baiṭhī chaki hārī chīl-chīl nandalālahim khvāye*

“Nearby in a field, green chickpea plants were growing. Upon seeing them, Śrī Kṛṣṇa together with His *sakhās* broke off some plants. The woman taking care of the field came to know of this and ran to catch them, but Kanhaiyā was too swift.

Keeping the plants under His arm, He ran very fast through crooked paths and finally came to a stop in Gahvaravana, where He roasted the green chickpeas and ate them with His *sakhās*. While they were laughing and enjoying eating roasted chickpeas, the cowherd woman arrived at that spot, but upon seeing the splendour of Kṛṣṇa's beauty, she forgot the incident and her anger was pacified. Due to absorption in motherly love (*vātsalya-bhāva*), she began shelling the peas and personally fed Kanhaiyā."

Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa

This pond is also called Gahvara-kuṇḍa. Canopied by creepers on all sides and covered by thick trees, this pond is the very beauty of Gahvaravana. Nearby are beautiful groves. Vaiṣṇavas perform *parikramā* of these groves with deep faith and roll in the dust here. This pond holds many memories of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's various amorous exchanges.



Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa

Dohanī-kuṇḍa

This pond is situated south of Gahvaravana and south-west of the village of Ciksaulī. The cows were milked (*godohana*) here at the time of Kṛṣṇa’s manifest pastimes. This was the cowshed of the many hundred of thousands of cows belonging to Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja.

One day, Kīśorī Rādhikā was watching the cows being milked, and She too desired to milk them. She took a clay pot and proceeded to do so. Mischievous Kṛṣṇa arrived at that spot and said, “*Sakhī*, don’t You know how to milk a cow? Come, I will teach You.” And He sat down next to Her.

“O Mohana, teach Me,” Rādhikā said, and She placed Herself in front of Him.

“All right. You milk from two teats and I will milk from the other two, and keep looking at Me.” Laughing, Kṛṣṇa started to milk. Suddenly, He aimed a jet of milk at Rādhā’s face, saturating Her with it. He and the other *sakhīs* started laughing. This charming pastime has been described in the following Brajabhāṣā poem:

āmeṁ sāmeṁ baiṭh doū dohat karat ṭhaṭhor
dūdh dhār mukh ṭar ṭaḍat dṛg bhaye candr cakor

Ḍabharāro

After seeing Śrīmatī Rādhikā here, Kṛṣṇa’s eyes brimmed with tears. The word *ḍabharāro* means “full of tears”, and this village therefore became known by that name. Ḍabharāro is situated two miles south of Varsānā.

Rasolī

One-and-a-half miles south-west of Ḍabharāro is Rasolī, where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed the famous *rāsa* along with the *gopīs*. This is the birthplace of Tungavidyā Sakhī. Tungavidyā’s father is Puṣkara Gopa, her mother is Medhā Gopī, and her husband is Vāliśa. She is one of the main eight *sakhīs*, and is fully expert in

dancing, singing, playing instrumental music, astrology, writing poetry, cooking and various other arts. Tungavidyā Sakhī is also skilled in understanding the language of birds and animals, and in arranging for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's meeting.

Muktā-kuṇḍa

Here Śrīmatī Rādhikā, in a controversy with Kṛṣṇa, cultivated a field in which pearls were planted in abundance. This pastime has been narrated in detail by Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī in his book *Muktā-carita*.

Pīlī-pokhara

Surrounding this pond are *pīlu* trees that produce fruits in abundance. On the pretext of collecting *pīlu* fruits, Śrīmatī Rādhikā would come here to perform varieties of playful pastimes. Śrī Kṛṣṇa would also come here from Nandagaon and enact many pastimes with Her. Once, the unmarried daughter of Kīrtidā, Śrīmatī



Pīlī-pokhara

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Rādhikā, and Her *sakhīs* went to Nandagaon to see Yaśodā-maiyā. Charmed by Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s beauty and qualities, Yaśodā-maiyā desired in her heart to marry Rādhikā to her son Kṛṣṇa and thus have Her as her daughter-in-law. So great was her desire that she painted Kiśorī Rādhā’s hands yellow. Rādhikā’s heart became very happy but, as She returned to Her father’s house in Varsānā, She became quite embarrassed. She washed and scrubbed Her hands in this pond, and the pond’s water turned yellow. This pond is therefore called Pīrī-pokhara or Pīlī-pokhara, “the yellow pond”. It is also called Piyāla-kuṇḍa because *piyāla* trees surround it.

Kīrtidā-kuṇḍa

This pond is situated near Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa, in the north-east. Śrī Rādhikā’s mother, Śrī Kīrtidā, used to bathe here daily. This pond is also famous by the name Kīrti-sarovara.

*namaḥ kīrtir mahābhāge!
sarveṣāṃ govrajaukasām
sarva-saubhāgyade tīrthe
sukīrtisarase namaḥ*

Bṛhat Pārāśara; quoted in Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa

Vrajeśvara Mahādeva

Near Bhānu-sarovara is the deity of *devādhideva* Mahādeva (Śiva), which was installed by Vṛṣabhānu Bābā and the other *gopas* to fulfil their desires. The Vrajavāsīs worship him for their welfare. According to hearsay, some Vrajavāsīs once desired to remove this deity from here and take him to a better place. As they dug, the deity of Mahādeva increased in depth, and they were unable to reach the deity’s base. In the end, they gave up the idea of removing this deity, understanding that this was the appropriate place for him, and begged Mahādeva for forgiveness.

PASTIME PLACES VISITED AFTER PARIKRAMĀ OF VARSĀṆĀ

Prema-sarovara

This pond is situated on the road to Nandagaon, one mile from Varsāṇā. It is shaped like a boat and is so beautifully decorated on all sides with lush *kadamba* trees that it seems *prema* itself has manifested as a pond. This charming place, which attracts the hearts of the devotees, is where Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa enjoy loving pastimes together. It is also where *prema-vaicittya*⁵ manifested in Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Once, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, surrounded by Lalitā and the other *sakhīs*, were immersed in various kinds of loving pastimes when a bumblebee hovered around the beautiful lotus face of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Thinking Her face to be a lotus flower, the bee wanted to sit there and drink its nectar; and so it continued to hover around Her face. Śrīmatījī became afraid and covered Her face with Her palms. She also tried to chase the bee away, but to no avail. Madhumaṅgala saw Śrīmatī Rādhikā's distress and chased the bumblebee far away with his stick. Upon his return, he announced, "I have chased *madhusūdana* far away from here. He has gone and will not return." When Śrīmatī Rādhikā heard Madhumaṅgala's words, She at once thought that Madhusūdana Kṛṣṇa had gone away and had left Her, although She was sitting directly in Kṛṣṇa's lap. She began to lament, deeply afflicted by separation from Him. She could not, at that instant, understand that *madhusūdana* also means "bumblebee". She wept and repeatedly cried out, "Oh, Prāṇanātha, where have You gone? Oh, Lord of My life, where have You gone?"

Upon seeing these amazing transcendental sentiments known as *prema-vaicittya*, in His beloved Rādhikā, Kṛṣṇa also forgot that She was sitting on His lap. He too wept and cried, "O My beloved!" and They both fainted. The tears that flowed from Their eyes and





Prema-sarovara

the perspiration that poured from Their bodies created this pond. When the *sakhīs* saw Their condition, they too became senseless. Śrīmatī's female parrot began to loudly chant Śrī Rādhā's name, and the male parrot began to loudly chant Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name. As They heard each other's name, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa regained external consciousness and gazed upon each other with great yearning. Gradually, the *sakhīs* also regained consciousness and in boundless bliss began to call out, "Jaya, jaya!" The poet Śrī Mādhurījī describes this pastime in a very charming way.

After this incident, Śrī Kṛṣṇa thought to Himself, "Although I remain close by My beloved Śrīmatī Rādhikā, I am unable to pacify the suffering She experiences in separation from Me. The heat of impending separation constantly scorches Her, and I see no means to console Her. When I am far away from Her, She constantly thinks of Me out of separation from Me. She becomes so absorbed in transcendental emotions that laughing, She talks to *tamala* trees, thinking them to be Me, and plays with Her *sakhīs*. And sometimes She displays *māna*. In contrast, when I am close by Her, She is overwhelmed by a feeling of separation from Me, and She becomes distressed and cries. In this condition, I am unable to console Her, even if I am right beside Her.

"Thus, Śrī Rādhā can only be consoled when I am far away from Her. In this state of separation, Her fire of separation can be somewhat pacified upon having an internal transcendental vision (*sphūrti*) of Me or beholding objects like the *tamala* tree that possess a lustre similar to My own. This is because She actually considers them to be Me, Her dear most beloved." Thinking in this way, Kṛṣṇa secretly decided to leave for a distant place. This is the main reason why He left Vṛndāvana to go to Mathurā and Dvārakā.

The transcendental sentiment that Śrīmatī Rādhikā displays here is the topmost *mādana-bhāva*, which is found only in Her. It does not manifest even in Lalitā and the other *sakhīs*. In this *mādana-bhāva*, feelings of separation (*vipralambha*) and meeting



The deities of Śrī Prema-bihārījī at Prema-sarovara

(*sāmbhoga*), as well as all other mutually opposed *bhāvas*, are present simultaneously in an astonishing way.

Prema-sarovara is a manifestation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's transcendental sentiments, as the following Brajabhāṣa poem explains:

*prem sarovar prem kī bhārī rahe din rain
jañh jañh pyāri pag dharat śyām dharat tañh nain*

“Day and night, Prema-sarovara is always filled with *prema*, or divine love. Pyāri Śrīmatī Rādhikā keeps Her lotus feet there, and Śyāma desires to keep those lotus feet in the vision of His eyes. (In other words, Śyāma worships this pond because Śrīmatī has placed Her feet in its waters.)”

There is no doubt that by bathing in this pond, one attains *prema* for the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Here one can

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take *darśana* of Lalitā-Mohanajī, a *rāsa-manḍala*, a place where They would swing (*jhūla-sthala*), the temple of Prema-bihārījī and the sitting-places (*baiṭhakas*) of Śrī Vallabhācārya and Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha. The village of Gājipura lies east of this pond. On the day of Bhādra-śuklā-dvādaśī (the fourth day from Rādhāṣṭamī) *bhūḍhī-lilā* is performed here.

Vihvala-kuṇḍa

This pond lies near Saṅket, to the south-east. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa became restless and overwhelmed (*vihvala*) upon hearing Śrī Rādhā's name.

One day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Subala Sakhā were engaged in sweet *rasika* talk, as they sat in a beautiful *kuñja* by this delightful pond. A female parrot sitting on the branch of a nearby tree began to sing of Śrī Rādhikā's glorious qualities. When Kṛṣṇa heard the name and qualities of Rādhikā, various sentiments arose in His heart. He saw manifestations of Her wherever He looked and anxiously began to run here and there in an attempt to catch Her. Subala Sakhā noticed the extremely elevated *aṣṭa-sāttvika bhāvas* of *mahābhāva* on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's limbs, and contemplated how to pacify Him. He understood that the only way would be for Kṛṣṇa to meet with Śrīmatī Rādhikā. He somehow sent news of Kṛṣṇa's astonishing condition to Viśākhā Sakhī and requested her to bring Śrīmatī Rādhikā to Kṛṣṇa. Śrīmatī Rādhikā arrived there with Viśākhā and some other *sakhīs*, and from a distance Subala pointed towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His condition of extreme restlessness. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had been eager to meet and were therefore endlessly joyous to have each other's *darśana*. As soon as Śrī Kṛṣṇa experienced the touch of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's transcendental body, He felt satisfied and content. That *sādhaka* who affectionately performs *bhajana* here will definitely become inundated with *prema* for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Saṅket

This place is situated between Nandagaon and Varsānā. The first meeting of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, after Their *pūrvārāga*⁶, took place here. Śrīmatī Rādhikā would then come from the house of Her in-laws in Jāvaṭa and Śrī Kṛṣṇa would come from Nandagaon, and They would meet here. Vṛndā-devī, Vīrā-devī and Subala Sakhā would be messengers (*dūtīs*) and arrange the meeting of Priyā-Priyatama through signals (*saṅket*). This is why this place is called Saṅket. Sometimes, Śrīmatī Rādhikā would come here to meet with Kṛṣṇa, and sometimes Kṛṣṇa would come here to meet with Rādhikā.

In *Govinda-lilāmṛta* and *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura respectively, describe Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's meetings and pastimes here at midnight (*naīśa*) and pre-dawn (*niśānta*). These descriptions are full of *rasa*.



The temple of Saṅket-bihārījī

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Sanket-bihārījī



Saṅket-devī (Śrī Vīrā-devī)



Rāsa-manḍala

By Yogamāyā's desire, the principal messengers, Virā-devī and Vṛndā-devī, arrange the meeting of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Vṛndā-devī makes very sweet arrangements to awaken the Divine Couple at the end of the night, just before dawn breaks. The male parrot and the female parrot awaken Them with enchanting words. The black cuckoo helps to wake Them up with his sweet *kuhu-kuhu*, and the peacock and peahen with their *ke-kā*. Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs* offer *āratī* to the Divine Couple. When Kakkhaṭī, the old she-monkey, calls out "Jaṭilā", Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa become embarrassed and make Their separate ways to Their respective residences, where They fall asleep.

Delightful places worth visiting here are the temple of Saṅket-bihārījī, a *rāsa-manḍala* and the place of a swing. The *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī stands in front of the *rāsa-manḍala*, to its east. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu rested here while travelling



The place of the swing at Saṅket

through the twelve forests of Vraja. Just near the *rāsa-maṇḍala* is the temple of Saṅket-devī (Śrī Vīrā-devī); and nearby are Vihvalā-devī, Vihvala-kuṇḍa, Raṅga-mahala and Śayyā Mandira. Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa lies to the west of the village. On the bank of Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa is a sitting-place of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

Some people continue their pilgrimage of Vraja-maṇḍala by travelling from Saṅket to Nandagaon. Others visit and perform *parikramā* of the following pastime places before continuing on to Nandagaon: Riṭhaura, Bhāṇḍokhora, Meherāna, Sātoyā, Pāi, Tiloyāra, Śṛṅgāravaṭa, Bichora, Andhopa, Sonda, Vanacārī, Hoḍal, Kuñjaravana, Daīgaon, Lālpura, Hāroyāna, Sāñculī, Geṇḍo and so forth.

Riṭhaura

Riṭhaura is situated one-and-a-half miles west of Sanketvana, and is the village of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja's elder brother, Śrī Candrabhānu Gopa. Candrāvalī, the darling daughter of this same Candrabhānu, was born here. In the south-east of the village, surrounded by dense rows of trees, is Candrāvalī-kuṇḍa, where Candrāvalī used to perform her childhood pastimes with her *sakhīs*, bathe and play in the water. Another sitting-place of Vallabhācārya is here.

Bhāṇḍokhora

Bhāṇḍokhora, situated four miles north-west of Riṭhaura and four miles west of Nandagaon, is where Mahārāja Nanda had his cowshed that was situated in the west. Earthen vessels (*bhāṇḍa*) were filled with milk or washed here, which is why this place is known as Bhāṇḍokhora.

Meherāna-gaon

Meherāna-gaon lies two miles west of Bhāṇḍokhora. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's uncle Abhinandana Gopa lived here, and his cowshed was nearby. Abhinandana Gopa is the second eldest among Vrajarāja Nanda and his four brothers. Some people also consider this place to be the home of Yaśodā's father. In the eastern part of this village is Kṣīrasāgara. It is said that at midnight on Śīva-rātri, a stream of milk emanates from the middle of this pond, which is why it is named Kṣīrasāgara, or "Ocean of Milk".

Once, Yaśodā-maiyā and child Kṛṣṇa came to the house of Abhinandana, Yaśodā-maiyā's elder brother-in-law. After dinner, Yaśodā-maiyā sat on the bed lulling Kṛṣṇa to sleep in her lap. "Maiyā, please tell a story," Kṛṣṇa said. Yaśodā proceeded to narrate a story as Kṛṣṇa nodded and murmured, "Yes, yes."

Yaśodā said, "Once there was a king named Daśaratha. He had four sons – Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna. Rāma married Jānakī, the daughter of Mahārāja Janaka. She was also

known as Sītā. On the order of His father, Rāma went to the forest with His wife Sītā and younger brother Lakṣmaṇa.”

“Yes, yes,” Kṛṣṇa uttered. Yaśodā-maiyā continued, “In the forest, a demon named Rāvaṇa kidnapped Sītā.”

Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa, being absorbed in His previous incarnation as Rāma, called out, “Lakṣmaṇa, bring My bow! Lakṣmaṇa, bring My bow!” and jumped up from bed. Seeing this made Yaśodā-maiyā fearful. This pastime took place here.

Sātoyā

This village lies two miles west of Meherāna-gaon. It is also called Satvāsa. At this place, Mahārāja Satrājita, the father of one of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s queens named Satyabhāmā, worshipped the Sungod. Over the years, the word *satrā* has evolved into the name Satvāsa.

North-east of this village is Sūrya-kuṇḍa, on the northern bank of which there is a temple of Sūryadeva, or the Sungod. Mahārāja Satrājita used to worship Sūryadeva here after bathing in the pond. Sūryadeva became pleased and awarded him a *sūryakānta-maṇi*, a jewel which daily yielded him an abundance of gold.

Pāigaon

Pāigaon is situated five-and-a-half miles north-west of Satvāsa. Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was playing hide and seek with the *sakhīs*. Kṛṣṇa hid somewhere, and Rādhikā and the *sakhīs* anxiously searched for Him. After great endeavour, the *gopīs* found Kṛṣṇa here. Rādhikā and the *sakhīs* became overjoyed to have spotted Kṛṣṇa, and they cried out, “Pāi-pāi! – I have found, I have found!”. This village thus became renowned as Pāi. All the villages mentioned above lie on the border of Vraja.

Tiloyāra

Here, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhīs* became so absorbed in their playful pastimes that they entirely forgot to eat, what to speak

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of to return home. Vṛndā-devī finally reminded them to go home. This place became known as Tiloyāra because here Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* were not even slightly conscious of the passing of time. *Tilamātra* means “very slightly” and is used in Hindi to denote a very slight measurement of time or space. Tiloyāra is also situated on the border of Vraja-manḍala. Muslims of the *meva* caste reside in the villages around here.

Śṛṅgāravaṭa

This place is situated two miles north of Tiloyāra. While playing here, the *sakhās* decorated Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s body with sixteen kinds of ornaments (*śṛṅgāra*). Sometimes, Śrī Kṛṣṇa combed and decorated Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s hair with sixteen kinds of ornaments. The banyan (*vaṭa*) tree that was once here has now disappeared, but the village is still known by the name of Śṛṅgāravaṭa or Śṛṅgāra-gaon.

Bichora

This pastime place is situated one-and-a-half miles north-east of Śṛṅgāravaṭa and ten miles south-west of Kosī. Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed various kinds of pastimes here with Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *sakhīs*. Just as They were about to go home, They became greatly distressed by Their impending separation. This village has therefore become known as Bichora. The purport of the following verse from *Śrī Bhakti-ratnākara* states that the word *bichora* is derived from *viccheda*, meaning “separation”.

*krīḍāvasānete donhe cale nijālaya
viccheda-prayukta e ‘bichora’ nāma haya*

Andhopa

Andhopa lies two miles north-west of Bichora and three miles north of Śṛṅgāravaṭa. It too is situated on the border of Vraja.

Sonda

The village of Sonda lies four miles north-east of Andhopa. Nanda Mahārāja's younger brother Sananda used to live in this village. Sananda deeply loved Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes he would call for Kṛṣṇa, bathe and dress Him, seat Him next to himself, and feed Him delicious preparations.

Vanacarī

Vanacarī is situated two miles north of Sonda and east of the Mathurā–Delhi highway. It too lies on the border of Vraja. There is a temple of Dāūjī here.

Hoḍal

Hoḍal lies four miles south-east of Vanacarī on the Delhi–Mathurā highway. Near this village is Pāṇḍavavana, where the Pāṇḍavas resided during their exile. The nearby Pāṇḍava-kuṇḍa is where the Pāṇḍavas used to bathe and drink water.

Kuñjaravana

South-west of Hoḍal, about one mile away, is Kuñjaravana, where Kṛṣṇa used to play with the *sakhīs* in the *kuñjas*. Sometimes, many *sakhīs* together would make themselves into an elephant (*kuñjara*) here, which Śrī Kṛṣṇa rode. Because this incident took place here, this place became known as Kuñjaravana.

Daīgaon

Daīgaon lies three miles south of Hoḍal, and is where Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* looted yoghurt from the *gopīs* on the excuse of collecting tax. Here, one can have *darśana* of Dadhi-kuṇḍa, Madhusūdana-kuṇḍa, Śṛṅgāra Mandira, Śītala-kuṇḍa and Sapta-vṛkṣa-maṇḍali. On the bank of Śītala-kuṇḍa under a *kadamba* tree is a sitting-place of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

Lālpura

This village is situated one-and-a-half miles west of Daīgaon. North of this village is an *āśrama* of Durvāṣā Muni. Durvāṣā-kuṇḍa and a temple of Durvāṣā are here.

Hāroyāna-grāma

This village is currently called Pīparavāra. Here, Śrīmatī Rādhā defeated Kṛṣṇa in a game of dice and won His flute.

Once, Śrīmatī Rādhikā consulted Lalitā and the other *sakhīs*, saying, “Since Kṛṣṇa is physically more powerful than us, He defeats us in the games which depend upon bodily strength. Please think of a game based upon intelligence by which we can easily defeat Him.” Lalitā Sakhī advised Śrīmatī to challenge Kṛṣṇa to a game of dice. The *sakhīs* then challenged Kṛṣṇa to a game. It had no sooner started, when Śrīmatī Rādhikā easily defeated Him and snatched away His flute, which had been kept on stake. Madhumaṅgala, who was sitting nearby, pretended to be sad and said, “Kanhaiyā, the *gopīs* have just taken Your flute, and they will now confiscate everything of Yours. You are expert at grazing the cows, so go and do that. I feel very unhappy when I see You defeated like this.” Saying this, he started laughing. Kṛṣṇa rebuked him. He called him a talkative *brāhmaṇa* and told him to keep quiet.

This village has been named Hāroyāna on account of this pastime, in which Kṛṣṇa was defeated at dice. *Hārṇā* means “to be defeated”.

Sāñculī

This place is situated four miles south of Hāroyāna-grāma and six miles north-west of Nandagaon. In this village, one can have *darśana* of the temple of Candrāvalī Sakhī and of Sūrya-kuṇḍa. Candrāvalī used to meet Kṛṣṇa here on the pretext of performing Sūrya-pūjā.

Geṇḍo

This village lies three miles east of Sāñculi-grāma. Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva used to play ball games here with the *sakhās*. *Geṇḍa* means “ball”. This village has seven ponds. *Geṇḍa-kuṇḍa*, which is where Śrī Balarāma used to stand when they played ball games, is in the north of the village; and *Geṇḍa-khora*, which is where Kṛṣṇa used to stand, is in the north-west. *Gaidharāvana* is in the east, *Belvana-kuṇḍa* is in the south, *Gopī-kuṇḍa* is in the south-west, *Jalbhara-kuṇḍa* is in the west, and *Vihāra-kuṇḍa* is in the north-west. The *gopīs* filled their pots with water (*jal bharnā*) from *Jalbhara-kuṇḍa*.

Endnotes

¹ *purā kṛta-yuga-syānte
brahmaṇā prārthito hariḥ
mamopari sadā tvam
hi rāsa-kṛīḍām kariṣyasi
sarvābhi vraja-gopibhiḥ
prāvṛtkāle kṛtārthakṛt*
Varāha Purāṇa

² *tathā brahman vrajaṁ gatvā
vṛṣabhānu-puram gataḥ
parvato bhavasi tvam
hi mama kṛīḍām ca paśyasi
yasmāt brahmā parvato 'bhūd
vṛṣabhānu-pure sthitah*
Padma Purāṇa

³ *viṣṇu-brahma-nāmānau parvatau
dvau parasparau. dakṣiṇa-pārśve
brahma-nāma-parvataḥ vāma-
pārśve viṣṇu-nāma-parvataḥ.
brahma-parvatopari śrī-rādhā-
kṛṣṇa-mandiram, śrī-rādhā-
kṛṣṇa-darśanam, tad-adho-bhāge
śrī-vṛṣabhānu-gopa-mandiram,
vṛṣabhānu-kīrti-śrīḍām-darśanam,
tat-pārśve lalitā-sakhinām priyā-
sahitānām mandiram rādhādi-
nava-sakhinām darśanam. brahma-
parvatopari dāna-mandiram, hiṇḍola-
sthalam, mayūrakuṭī-sthalam, viṣṇu-*

*brahma-nāmnor-ubhayoḥ sāñkari
khorī-sthalam. brahma-parvatopari
śrī-rādhā-mandiram agre līlā-nṛtya-
maṇḍalam. viṣṇu-parvatopari-stham
śrī-kṛṣṇāmandiram agre līlā-nṛtya-
mandiram, tat-pārśve vilāsa-mandiram
tat-pārśve gahvarvanam tad-
adhasthale rāsa-maṇḍalam, rādhā-
sarovari dohanī-kuṇḍa, tat-samiṭe
citrakhyayā kṛta-mayūra-sarah.*

⁴ The modern enactment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes that takes place at Sāñkari-khor in Varsāṇā. This was inaugurated by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. Actually, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are never *būdhī*, old, but are ever fresh.

⁵ *Prema-vaicitrya* is a degree of transcendental love in which the lover and beloved are plunged into grief out of fear of separation from each other, even though they directly are in each other's presence.

⁶ *Purvarāga* is the lover and beloved's feeling of mutual attachment that exists prior to their first meeting. It is filled with intense eagerness and anticipation.







*“Those who are afraid of
the perplexities of worldly
life worship the Śrutis and
Smṛtis, and others may
worship the Mahābhārata.
Let them do so. I myself
will always worship Nanda
Bābā, in whose courtyard
the Supreme Absolute Truth
is crawling here and there
on His knees.”*





Նանպազաօղ







he royal palace of Nanda Mahārāja, the king of Vraja, is situated in Nandagaon. This village is a source of happiness because Śrī Nanda Rāya (Nanda Mahārāja), Upānanda, Abhinanda, Sunanda and Nandana all lived here.¹

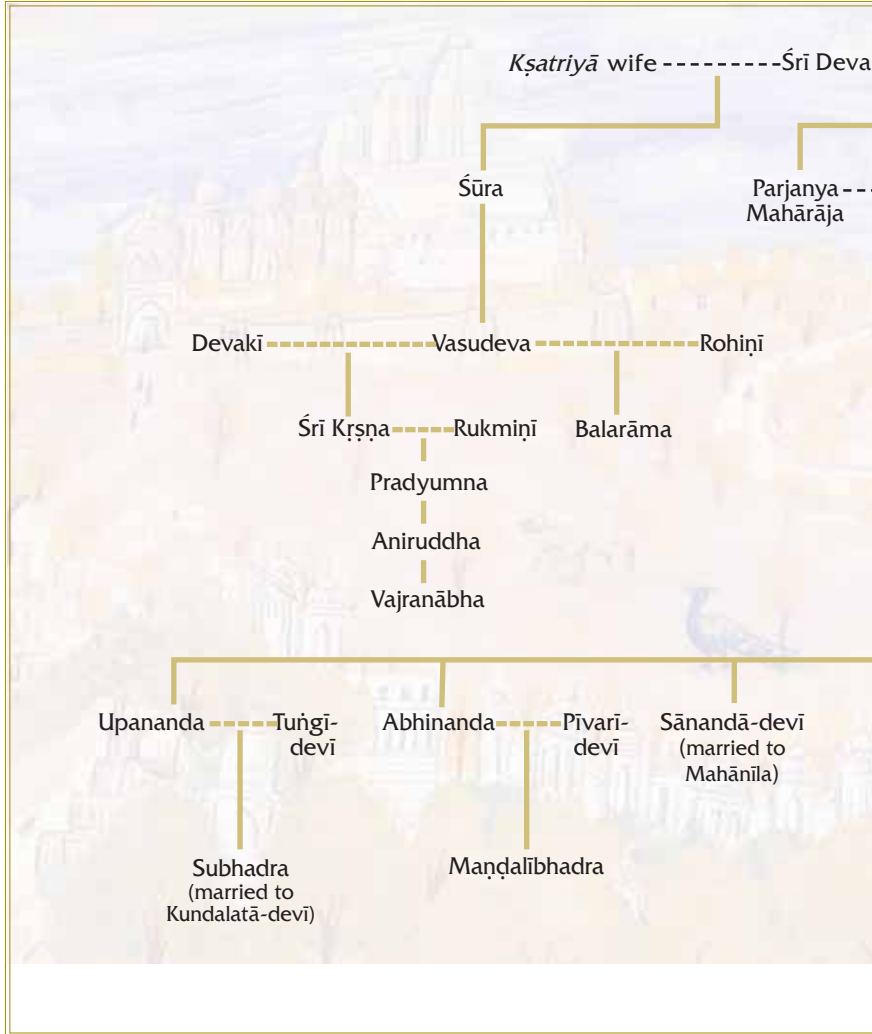
Nandagaon is situated sixteen miles northwest of Govardhana, eight miles south of Kosī and twenty-eight miles west of Vṛndāvana. The *parikramā* of Nandagaon is four miles. There are fifty-six ponds related to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's various pastimes here and it takes about three to four days to have *darśana* of them all.

Devādhideva Mahādeva Śaṅkara (Śiva) pleased his worshipful deity Śrī Kṛṣṇa and asked for the boon to have *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa ordered him to situate himself in Nandagaon in the form of a hill. Śrī Śaṅkara Mahādeva followed this order and became Nandīśvara Hill. He then waited for the arrival of his worshipful deity. To fulfil the desire of the exalted Vaiṣṇava Śrī Śaṅkara, Śrī Kṛṣṇa

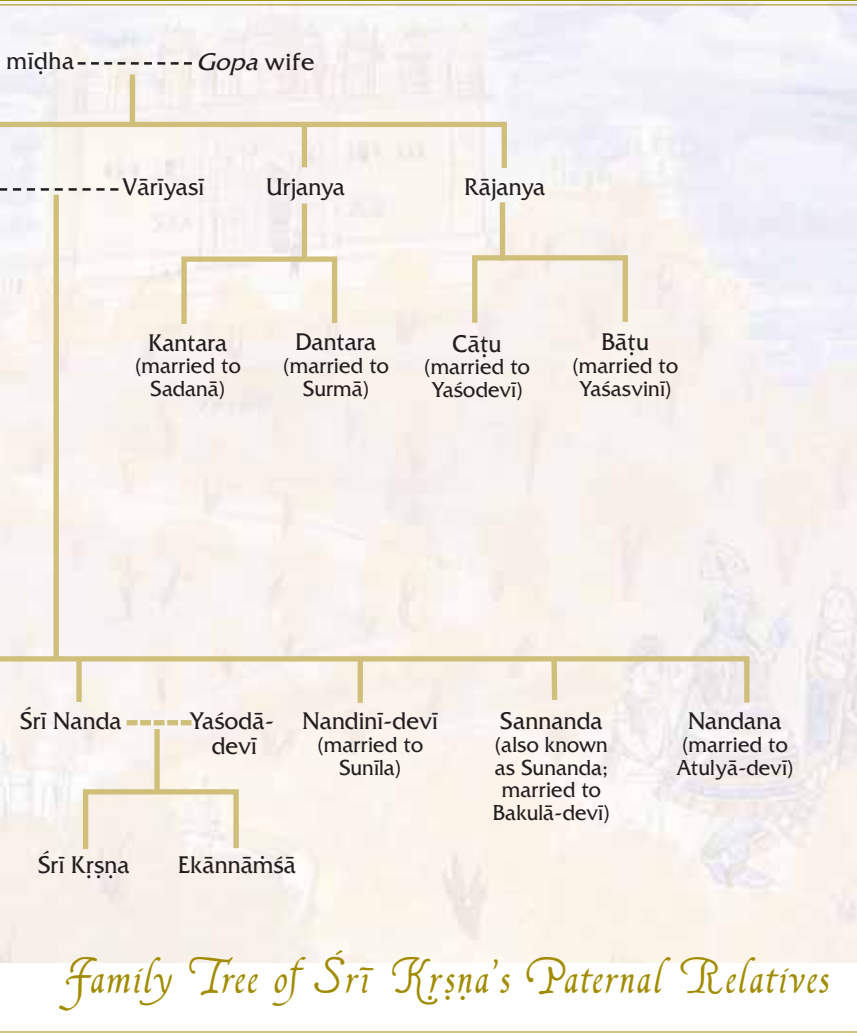
ŚRĪ VṚJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

performed His sweet childhood (*bālya*) and boyhood (*pauganḍa*) pastimes on Nandīśvara Hill, along with the Vrajavāsīs like Nanda Bābā, Yaśodā-maiyā and His *gopa* friends.

At the end of Dvāpara-yuga, there lived a sage named Devamīḍha. He had two wives, one from a *kṣatriya* family and



the other from a *gopa* family. Śūrasena was born from the *kṣatriya* wife, and Parjanya Gopa from his *gopa* wife. Vasudeva and other *kṣatriya* sons were born from Śūrasena. Parjanya Gopa maintained his life by agriculture and rearing cows. He lived near Nandiśvara Hill with his wife Variyāsī Gopī.



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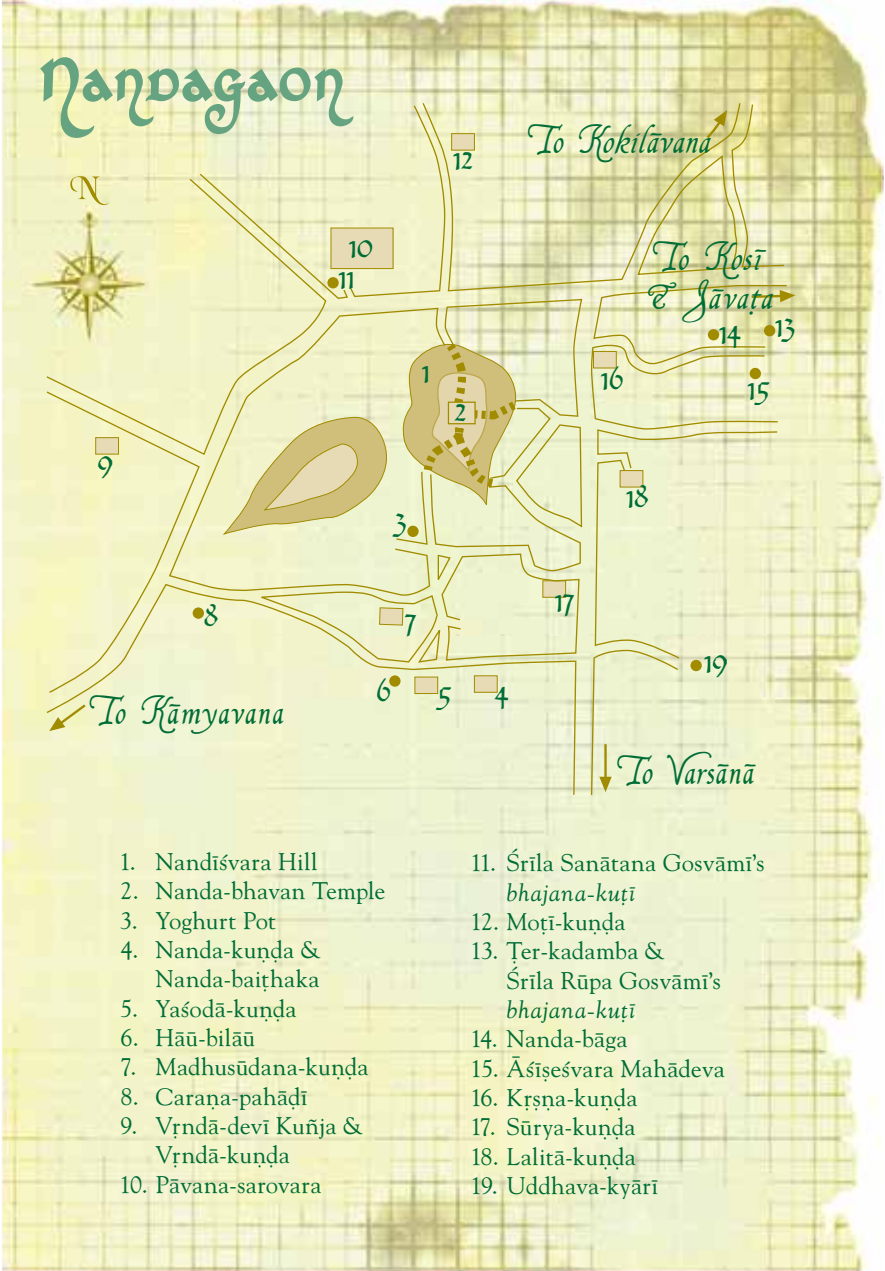


Nandīsvara Hill

Once, Devarṣi Nārada came there, and Parjanya Gopa pleased him by offering him appropriate worship. He then requested Nārada to bless him with excellent progeny. Nārada initiated him into the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa *mantra* and informed him, “By meditating upon this *mantra* you will have illustrious progeny.” When Nārada left, Parjanya Gopa set about repeating this *mantra* in his mind. Daily, he would meditate upon it following the proper process, after first taking his bath in the nearby Taḍāga-tīrtha. One day while he was absorbed in the *mantra*, a divine voice from the sky announced, “O Parjanya, you are very fortunate to have performed one-pointed worship of Me. You will have five highly qualified sons. Of these, the middle son, Nanda, will be greatly fortunate. All victorious Śrī Hari Himself, who is fully endowed with the six kinds of opulences and who gives pleasure to all living beings, will appear as his son.” Upon hearing this divine announcement, Parjanya Gopa became overjoyed.

In due course of time, five sons and two daughters were born. Parjanya Gopa and his family stayed near Nandīśvara Hill for some time longer, but, fearing the disturbances created by the Keśī demon, they left for Gokula-Mahāvana. There, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra was born as the son of the middle brother, Nanda Mahārāja. After some time, however, on account of the disturbances of Pūtanā, Śakaṭāsura, Tṛṇāvarta and other demons, Vrajeśvara Śrī Nanda Mahārāja, together with his son, family members, relatives, cows, *gopas* and *gopīs*, moved to Chaṭṭikarā village. After that they moved to Kāmyavana, Khelanvana and other places before finally returning to live at Nandīśvara (Nandagaon).

Many of Kṛṣṇa’s childhood and boyhood pastimes took place here. It was from here that on Gopāṣṭamī day, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva along with the *sakhās* first went out to graze the calves, and after some years the cows.



- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Nandiśvara Hill | 11. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's
<i>bhajana-kuᅇī</i> |
| 2. Nanda-bhavan Temple | 12. Moᅇī-kuᅇᅇa |
| 3. Yoghurt Pot | 13. ᅇer-kadamba &
Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's
<i>bhajana-kuᅇī</i> |
| 4. Nanda-kuᅇᅇa &
Nanda-baiᅇhaka | 14. Nanda-bāga |
| 5. Yaśodā-kuᅇᅇa | 15. Āᅇīᅇeśvara Mahādeva |
| 6. Hāu-bilāu | 16. Kᅇᅇᅇa-kuᅇᅇa |
| 7. Madhusūdana-kuᅇᅇa | 17. Sūrya-kuᅇᅇa |
| 8. Caraᅇa-pahāᅇī | 18. Lalitā-kuᅇᅇa |
| 9. Vᅇᅇᅇā-devī Kuᅇīja &
Vᅇᅇᅇā-kuᅇᅇa | 19. Uddhava-kyāri |
| 10. Pāvana-sarovara | |

PASTIME PLACES WITHIN THE COMPOUND OF NANDA-BHAVĀNA

The compound of Nanda-bhavana is immense and holds many delightful pastime places. Śrī Raghupati Upādhyāya glorifies Nanda Bābā and this compound in very sweet words:



Entrance to Nanda-bhavana

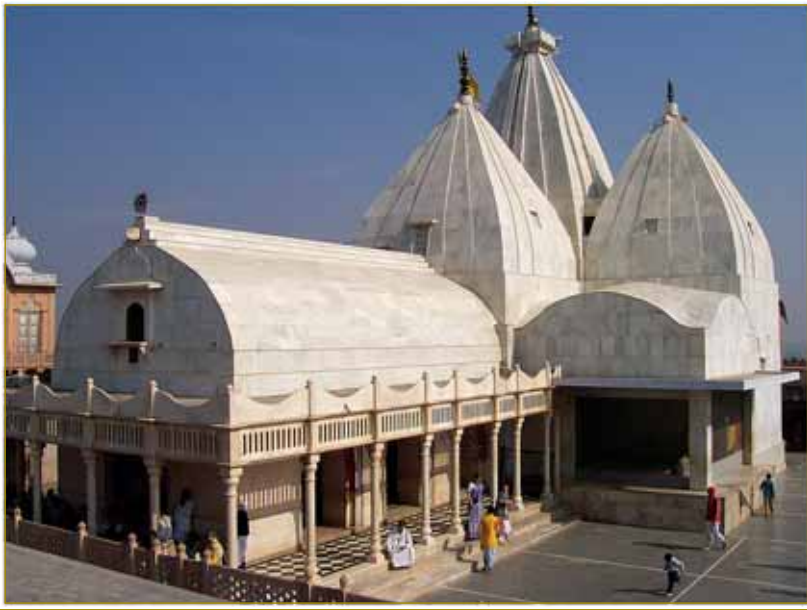
*śrutim apare smṛtim itare bhāratam anye bhajantu bhava-bhūtaḥ
aham iha nandaṁ vande yasyālinde paraṁ brahma*

Padyāvalī (126)

“Those who are afraid of the perplexities of worldly life worship the Śrutis and Smṛtis, and others may worship the *Mahābhārata*. Let them do so. I myself will always worship Nanda Bābā, in whose courtyard the Supreme Absolute Truth is crawling here and there on His knees.”

Nanda-bhavana (Nanda’s residence)

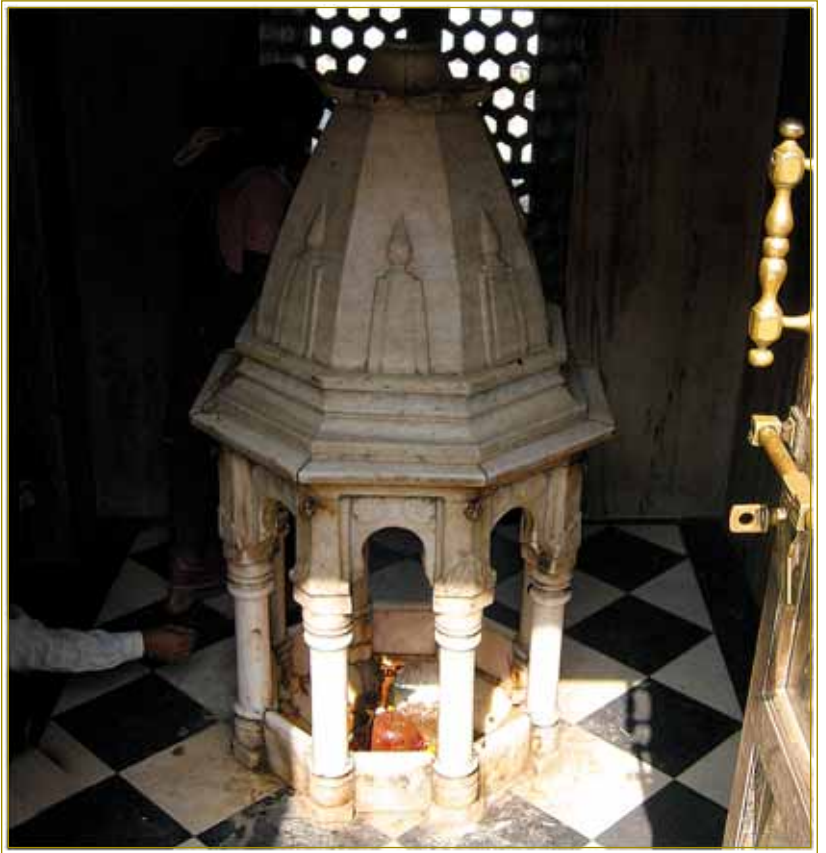
To the south, adjacent to Nandīśvara Hill, are a few ruins of the staircase of Nanda-bhavana. Nanda’s residence here was extensive, with separate bedrooms for everyone including Nanda Bābā, Mother Yaśodā, Mother Rohiṇī, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva. It had



The temple atop Nandīśvara Hill

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a kitchen, store-room and dining hall, as well as resting-rooms and other rooms for Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa. Here, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva performed many of Their childhood, boyhood and youth pastimes. Daily, at forenoon, Śrīmatī Rādhikā used to come here from Jāvaṭa with Her *sakhīs* on the zealous and loving requests of Mother Yaśodā, and with great delight, She would prepare many tasty foodstuffs for Kṛṣṇa together with Mother Rohiṇī. Kṛṣṇa used to eat with His *sakhās* in the adjacent large dining-hall and then rest in the bedroom situated one hundred steps from the dining-hall.



Nandīśvara Mahādeva

Rādhikā's resting place

This is Śrīmatī Rādhikā's resting place. After completing Her cooking, Śrīmatī Rādhikā would, on the request of Mother Yaśodā, take *prasāda* mixed with the remnants of Kṛṣṇa that Dhaniṣṭhā Sakhī would bring. Mother Yaśodā then invited Her to take rest in this garden. At that time, the *sakhīs* used to arrange for Her secret meeting with Kṛṣṇa. This place is called Rādhā-bāga, Rādhā's garden.

The path to the forest

Every day, Mother Yaśodā used to decorate Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in different ways, thus preparing Them to go to the forest to graze the cows. She would send Them and the *sakhās* off from here with a heavy heart.

The path to go cow grazing

Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the best of dancers, traversed this path along with Their friends to go cow grazing.

The place where Rādhikā was bidden farewell

Here, Mother Yaśodā used to put Śrīmatī Rādhikā on her lap before seeing Her off to Jāvaṭa with tearful eyes.

The place where yoghurt was churned

Every day in the early morning, Mother Yaśodā used to churn yoghurt at this place. To this day, one can see an enormous yoghurt pot here.

Pūrṇamāsī's arrival path

Yogamāyā Pūrṇamāsī used to arrive at Nanda-bhavana along this path to have *darśana* of baby Kṛṣṇa.



OTHER PASTIME PLACES IN NANḌAGAON

Nanda-kunḍa

Nanda-kunḍa lies a short distance to the south of Nanda-bhavana. Daily, early in the morning, Mahārāja Nanda used to bathe here, chant his regular *mantras* and perform his other morning duties. Sometimes, he would bring Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma here on his shoulders and bathe Them too. In the temple on the bank of this pond are attractive deities of Nanda Bābā with his children, Kṛṣṇa and Dāūjī, sitting in his lap.



Nanda-kunḍa



Nanda Bābā with Kᅇᅇᅇᅇᅇ (left) and Dāᅇᅇᅇᅇᅇ (right)

Nanda-baiṭhaka

Vrajeśvara Mahārāja Nanda would regularly sit here with his elder and younger brothers, as well as with the elderly *gopas*, priests and so on, to discuss Kṛṣṇa’s well-being. It is called a *baiṭhaka* because they would sit here together for discussions. *Baiṭhnā* means “to sit”. Nanda Mahārāja has several *baiṭhakas* in the eighty-four *kosas* of Vraja-manḍala. Wherever Nanda Bābā used to reside with his cows, *gopas*, *gopīs* and others is called Nanda-Gokula and there used to be periodic meetings like this in those places. Thus, other such *baiṭhakas* include Choṭī-baiṭhana and Baḍī-baiṭhana. The following pastime refers to this kind of *baiṭhaka*, or assembly.

Seven-year-old Kṛṣṇa held Girirāja-Govardhana for seven days on His little finger and thus smashed the pride of Indra. The astonished elderly *gopas* called an assembly. Upānanda, the eldest brother of Nanda Mahārāja, was the chairman of this meeting to which Nanda Bābā had also been called. The elderly *gopas*



Nanda-baiṭhaka

expressed their opinion that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was not an ordinary boy. “Soon after taking birth, He killed the terrible *rākṣasī* Pūtanā, as if He were simply playing,” they said. “Afterwards, He killed Śakaṭāsura, Tṛṇāvarta, Aghāsura and many other demons. He subdued the terrible snake Kālīya and sent him out of Kālī-daha. Just a few days ago, He held the huge mountain Girirāja on His little finger for seven days and saved Vraja from the heavy downpour of rain and raging storms. These are not the activities of an ordinary boy. It seems to us that He must be a perfected, liberated soul, a demigod or Nārāyaṇa Himself. It is not proper for us to consider Him to be the son of Nanda and Yaśodā, to chastise or threaten Him, or to address Him with words such as ‘thief’, ‘wilful’ and ‘impertinent’. Nanda, Yaśodā and the other *gopas* and *gopīs* should always deal with Him lovingly and respectfully.” All the *gopas* present heard this statement with much gravity and together they cautioned Nanda Bābā.

Nanda Bābā laughingly dismissed their words. “Respected gentlemen,” he said. “I have heard your statements, but I do not see even the slightest demigod-like symptom in Him nor any symptom of supreme godliness. I have known Him from His very birth. Does Bhagavān feel hunger or thirst? This boy cries fifty times a day for bread and butter. Does Bhagavān steal and tell lies? This boy goes to the homes of the *gopīs* and steals their butter, speaks lies and makes so much mischief. The neighbouring *gopīs* play games with Him and make Him dance for a hand-full of buttermilk and a *laddū*. Whoever He is, He has taken birth in our home as our son; therefore, it is our duty to raise Him to become an ideal man of excellent conduct who possesses all good qualities. That said, there is one thing we should remember. At the time of Kṛṣṇa’s name-giving ceremony, Maharṣi Gargācārya predicted that this child of ours would have qualities like those of Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa. This explains everything.”

Assemblies were held to discuss Kṛṣṇa’s well-being, His betrothal and other such matters.

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Yaśodā-kuṇḍa

This pond is situated south of Nanda-bhavana. Mother Yaśodā used to daily bathe here. Sometimes, she would bring Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma along and joyfully watch Their childhood games. After bathing, Mother Yaśodā would pray for Kṛṣṇa's well-being to Nṛsiṃhadeva in the temple on the bank of the pond. An ancient cave where many great saints have performed *sādhana* and attained the Supreme Lord lies at a secluded place near Yaśodā-kuṇḍa. To this day, this place, where perfected, great personalities have performed their *bhajana*, attracts *sādhakas*, who are completely unattached to material life, to come here to perform *bhajana*. Kāroharo-kuṇḍa lies near Yaśodā-kuṇḍa.



Yaśodā-kuṇḍa

Madhusūdana-kuṇḍa

This pond is situated south of Nandīśvara, near Yaśodā-kuṇḍa, and lies within a grove of trees and creepers that are laden with many kinds of flowers. Here, intoxicated bumblebees always buzz around, drinking nectar from the flowers. Kṛṣṇa plays with the *sakhās* in this forest and imitates the buzzing of the bees. One of the names for bumblebee is *madhusūdana*, and one of Kṛṣṇa's names is also Madhusūdana. This is where the two Madhusūdanas buzz, and this pond is therefore known as Madhusūdana-kuṇḍa.

Pānīhārī-kuṇḍa

The Vrajavāsīs used to drink the pure and sweet water of this pond, and the *gopa-ramaṇīs* would come here to fetch water. Therefore, this pond is also known as Panaghaṭa-kuṇḍa. A *panaghaṭa* is a place from which water is taken, like a well, river or pond. Kṛṣṇa would come to Panaghaṭa to meet with the *gopīs*, and they too would eagerly make their way here to meet Kṛṣṇa. While drawing water, they would become so absorbed in looking at Kṛṣṇa that they were unaware whether or not they had filled their pots. The pot of their hearts, however, would at once become filled with their beloved.

There is also another deep secret behind Panaghaṭa. The *gopīs* would come here remembering Kṛṣṇa's promise, or *pana*: "I will certainly meet you there." To fulfil His promise, Kṛṣṇa ensured that He was present here, waiting for them. Thus the *pana* (keeping of one's promise or drawing of water) of both Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* would be fulfilled here. This is the other reason why this place is known as Panaghaṭa.

Caraṇa-pahāḍī

This place is situated west of Nandagaon. During cow herding, Kṛṣṇa played His flute on this hill (*pahāḍī*) to assemble His hundreds of thousands of cows. By the tender and sweet sound of His flute, this hill melted and became marked with the impressions



Caraṇa-pahāḍī

of Kṛṣṇa's footprints (*caraṇa-cihna*). Hence, this hill is called Caraṇa-pahāḍī.

On Kāmsa's order, the great devotee Akrūra came to Nandagaon to bring Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā. When he saw Kṛṣṇa's footprints on this hill and everywhere in the sand nearby, he became filled with ecstatic emotions, and began crying and rolling around on them. To this day, devotees become ecstatic upon seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's footprints here.

Posts for binding the cows

Near Caraṇa-pahāḍī are Rohiṇī-kuṇḍa, Mohinī-kuṇḍa and a number of posts in a field for binding cows. This is the site of Nanda Bābā's cowshed. One can still see stone posts here. Vrajavāsī ladies worship these posts on special occasions.

Vṛndā-devī

Some distance north of Caraṇa-pahāḍī is the *kuñja* of Vṛndā-devī. She resided here at the time of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes

(*prakaṣa-lilā*). From here, she would arrange the meetings of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the *kuñjas* of Saṅket and other places. Sometimes, she would consult Yogamāyā Pūrṇimā-devī and on her instruction arrange the meeting of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa by employing ingenious trickery. Here lies the pond of Vṛndā-devī, in which she used to bathe and so forth. Vṛndā-devī wears beautiful clothes, and is decorated with many kinds of ornaments. She is the presiding forest-goddess of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in the *kuñjas*. It is impossible for anyone to enter Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes without Vṛndā-devī's mercy. Tulasījī is the worshipable form (*arcāvatāra*) of the original Vṛndā-devī. Kṛṣṇa does not accept any offering without *tulasī* leaves or *mañjarīs*.

Near Vṛnda-kuṇḍa, in the east, is Cauḍokhara, which is also called Caraṇa-kuṇḍa. Near this pond are Rohiṇī-kuṇḍa, Mohinī-kuṇḍa, the posts for binding the cows, Nanda Bābā's cowshed and Dohinī-kuṇḍa.

Pāvana-sarovara

This *sarovara*, or lake, lies north of Nandagaon when coming down from Nandīśvara Hill, and is situated on the side of the highway that leads towards Kāmyavana. The custom is to bathe in this lake before taking *darśana* of Nanda, Yaśodā and the others on the crest of the hill. It is said that Pāvana Gopa, the father of Viśākhā Sakhī, constructed this *sarovara*, thereby giving it its name. When Kṛṣṇa and His friends would return from cow grazing, they would bring the cows here to drink. At that time, Kṛṣṇa would call out “*Nīrī-nīrī*” and signal to the cows to enter the *sarovara*. He would then call out “*Cūñ-cūñ*” to induce the cows to drink water, and “*Tīrī-tīrī*” to call them back to the bank. The boys would satisfy the cows by having them drink water in this way before returning them to their resting place in the cowshed. The boys would then go back to their respective homes.

The Vrajavāsīs would also bathe in the fragrant and pure water of Pāvana-sarovara. Kṛṣṇa used to bathe here and frolic in the water

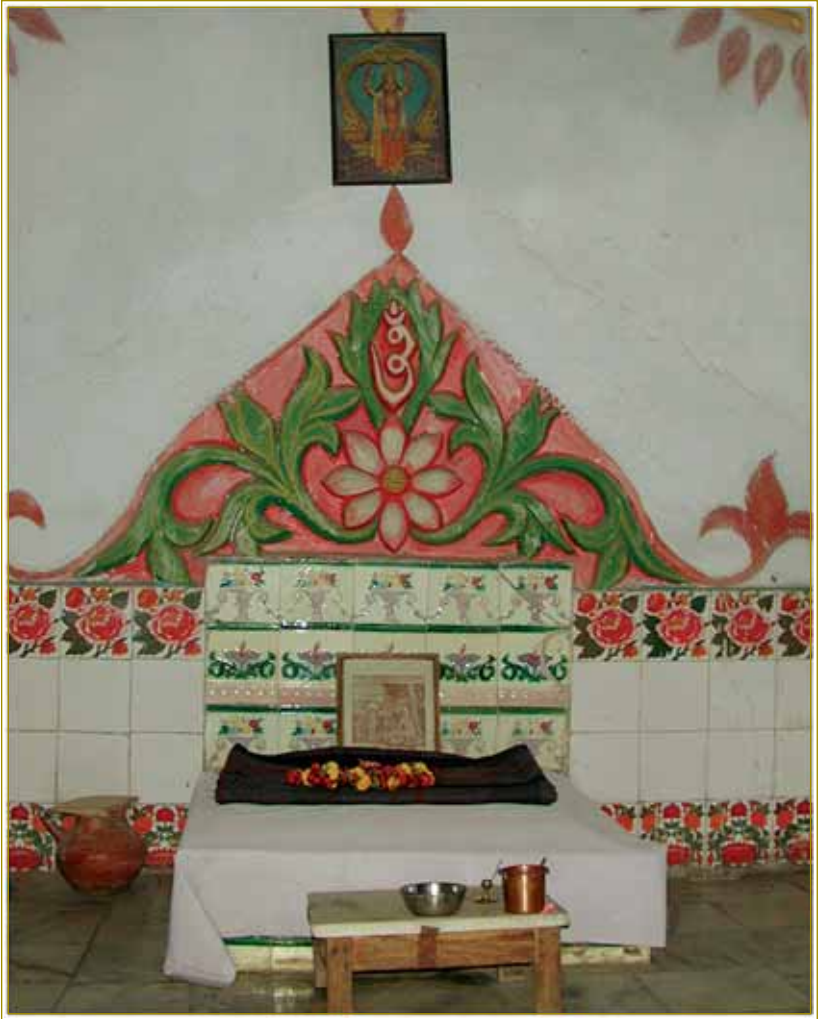


Pāvana-sarovara

with His friends. On the far bank, Śrīmatī Rādhikā used to bathe and play in the water with Her *sakhīs*. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa would dive in from His bank like a crocodile, make His way unseen to the bank of the *sakhīs*, and catch their feet. In this way, He played with them. Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu had a beautiful palace built for his daughter Śrīmatī Rādhikā on the northern bank of Pāvana-sarovara. She played many games with Her *sakhīs* in this palace, from which She could very easily have *darśana* of Her beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

On the south-eastern bank of Pāvana-sarovara is the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's associate Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī. Sometimes, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī would perform *bhajana* here so as to remember the sweet pastimes of Nandagaon, and sometimes he would go to associate with Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī at his *bhajana-kuṭī* near Ṭer-kadamba. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī also used



Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

to come here to meet with Sanātana Gosvāmī. Even today, many Gauḍīya bhaktas in Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's disciplic succession come to this place to perform bhajana.

Once, in the forest here, Sanātana Gosvāmī was very distressed in separation from Kṛṣṇa. Restlessly crying for Kṛṣṇa's darśana, he

went without eating and drinking for three days. At that time, he had no *bhajana-kuṭī* here. Kṛṣṇa came to Sanātana Gosvāmī as a cowherd boy carrying some milk in a clay pot, and said, “Why are you here, hungry and thirsty? Nobody remains hungry and thirsty in this place. My mother saw you in this condition and has sent this pot of milk for you. You must drink it. I will return later and collect the pot. Listen, My mother has also said that since it distresses the Vrajavāsīs to see you here in the forest like this, you should make a hut here and live in it.” Saying this, the boy left. Sanātana Gosvāmī drank the milk and immediately became restless with *kṛṣṇa-prema*. He cried bitterly, calling out, “O Kṛṣṇa, O Kṛṣṇa, You gave me *darśana* but also cheated me.” Although remaining invisible to Sanātana Gosvāmī, Kṛṣṇa pacified him and had a *bhajana-kuṭī* built for him through a Vrajavāsī. Sanātana Gosvāmī remained in this *bhajana-kuṭī*, and performed *bhajana*. Nearby is the temple of Pāvana-bihārī. The Vrajavāsīs in the village bathe in this *sarovara* in the morning and then take *darśana* of Pāvana-bihārī.

Nearby on the northern bank is a sitting-place of Śrī Vallabhācārya where he recited *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for one



Śrī Vallabhācārya's sitting-place

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month. In the west of Pāvana-sarovara is a *kadamba-khaṇḍī*, where the beauty of the *kadamba* trees is extraordinary. The bumble bees drink the nectar of the *kadamba* flowers and buzz about intoxicated. This *kadamba*-grove is especially dear to Śrī Baladeva, who used to enjoy many games here with His younger brother Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās*. This unique *kadamba*-grove reminds one of Kṛṣṇa and Dāūjī's innumerable pastimes. Even today, many saintly persons perform *bhajana* here.

Taḍāga-tīrtha (Khunnāhāra-kuṇḍa)

This is Śrī Parjanya Gopa's place of worship, and is situated near Pāvana-sarovara towards the north-east. Previously, Parjanya Gopa had no sons, so he took initiation from Devarṣi Nārada in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa *mantra*. Giving up eating and drinking, he performed severe austerities at this place. Morning, noon and evening he bathed in this *sarovara*, worshipped the deity and chanted the *mantra* he had received from his holy master. After some time, he heard a divine voice from the sky: "O Parjanya, you will have five sons who will be endowed with all good qualities. Bhagavān Śrī Hari Himself will take birth as the son of Nanda, your middle son. He will destroy the demons and perform many kinds of pastimes." This pond is also called Khunnāhāra-kuṇḍa because Parjanya performed austerities here. *Khunnāhāra* means "to give up grains and water".

Dhovanī-kuṇḍa

This pond is situated north-west of Nandagaon, below Nandīśvara Hill, and somewhat near to Pāvana-sarovara. It received the name Dhovanī-kuṇḍa because the pots of milk and yoghurt were washed (*dhonā*) here.

Motī-kuṇḍa (Muktā-kuṇḍa)

This charming pond, situated about one mile north of Nandīśvara Taḍāga, is surrounded by *karila* and *pilū* trees. While

cow herding with His friends, Kṛṣṇa used to bring the cows here to drink. He and the *sakhās* also drank water here and performed many pastimes together. Once, Kṛṣṇa planted pearls (*motī* or *muktā*) here and produced an abundant crop.

When Kṛṣṇa passed from childhood to enter youth, Yaśodā-maiyā began to think about His betrothal. She was particularly inclined toward the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, Kīṣorī Rādhikā, who was endowed with all good qualities. Kīrtidā came to know what Yaśodā-maiyā was thinking and, after discussing it with her husband, Vṛṣabhānu, they sent many varieties of clothes and ornaments together with a basketful of pearls to Nanda-bhavana for the engagement. Vrajarāja Nanda and Vrajarānī Yaśodā became overjoyed, but it also caused them anxiety. Custom demanded that they send an even greater quantity of pearls to Varsānā in exchange for the engagement gifts, but they simply did not have that many pearls. When Kṛṣṇa entered the house He saw that His parents were in anxiety, and asked them the reason why. Yaśodā-maiyā explained the situation to Kṛṣṇa, who simply said, “Do not worry. I will quickly arrange something.”

At an opportune moment, Kṛṣṇa quietly took all of His parents’ pearls, dug a field near this pond, and planted them in it. Every day, He irrigated the field with cow’s milk. When Nanda Bābā and Yaśodā-maiyā could not find the few pearls they had, they became even more concerned and asked Kṛṣṇa if He knew where they might be. “Yes,” Kṛṣṇa said. “I have planted those pearls, and very soon they will bear many more.”

Hearing this, Bābā and Maiyā exclaimed, “Oh, *lālā*, has anyone ever farmed pearls?”

Kṛṣṇa smiled. “Yes,” He said, “and when My pearls will sprout and fructify, you will see this for yourselves.”

Surprisingly, the pearls began to sprout after a few days, and lush, green plants emerged. A few days later, those plants bore fruit; and as these fruits ripened, radiant and splendid divine pearls began to manifest. Now there was a great abundance of

pearls. Kṛṣṇa gave a large amount to His mother, who was able to fill three or four beautiful baskets with pearls, golden ornaments and clothes, and send them to Varsānā to confirm the betrothal of Rādhā to Kṛṣṇa.

When Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs* heard that Śrī Kṛṣṇa had planted pearls and reaped a huge crop, they asked Him for some. However, Kṛṣṇa flatly refused. “When I requested some milk from you to irrigate My pearls, you refused to give Me any. Now I will decorate My cows with ornaments made from these pearls, but I will not give any to you.” Vexed, the *gopīs* stole pearls from their own homes, dug a field and planted them. Although they irrigated the field with cow-milk for many days, the pearls did not sprout pearl plants – only thorny bushes that were completely devoid of fruit emerged from the soil.

The disappointed *gopīs* returned to Kṛṣṇa and narrated the whole story to Him. Kṛṣṇa smiled and said, “Come, I want to see your pearl field Myself.” Kṛṣṇa went there and uprooted all the thorny plants. He planted His own ripened pearls and irrigated the field with cow-milk. Within a few days, these pearls sprouted and also bore pearls, filling the *gopīs* hearts with joy.

Phulvārī-kuṇḍa

This pond is situated near Mukṭā-kuṇḍa in the middle of a dense grove of *kadamba* trees. One day, Śrī Rādhā and Her *sakhīs* were picking flowers here when Kṛṣṇa suddenly arrived and said, “Who are you? Every day, you steal flowers from My garden.”

Hearing this, Śrīmatī Rādhikā rebuked Him. “You don’t know who I am?”

Saying no more, Kṛṣṇa placed His flute to His lips and began to play, casting charming glances at Rādhā as He walked away. The very sight of Kṛṣṇa leaving greatly distressed Rādhā, who fainted in separation from Him. Lalitā thought that Rādhā had been stung by a black serpent. When She did not regain consciousness after several attempts to revive Her, the *sakhīs* became most worried.

Just then, Kṛṣṇa arrived disguised as a doctor who cures one of snakebite. He removed the effect of the poison by chanting *mantras* and whispered in Śrīmatījī's ear, "I have come. Just see." Hearing this, Śrīmatī Rādhikā immediately sat up. She smiled to see Kṛṣṇa nearby and an ocean of bliss welled up in the hearts of the *sakhīs*. This pastime took place here.

Sāhasī-kuṇḍa

Some distance to the east of Phulvārī-kuṇḍa is Vilāsavaṭa, and east of Vilāsavaṭa is Sāhasī-kuṇḍa. Here, the *sakhīs* encouraged and arranged for Rādhājī to meet with Kṛṣṇa. The *sakhīs* would hang a beautiful swing from the nearby banyan tree, and swing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa while singing songs in *malhāra* and other *rāgas*. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa came here to meet with Rādhikā and enjoy pastimes with Her.

Another name of Sāhasī-kuṇḍa is Sārasī-kuṇḍa. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were inseparable. They would eat together, play together and even sleep together. Once, the two brothers were playing here when Yaśodā-maiyā came looking for Them. She affectionately addressed Them as a pair of swans, or *sāras*. Since then, this pond has been called Sārasī-kuṇḍa.

Near this pond are Śyāmapīparī-kuṇḍa, Vaṭa-kadamba, Kyārī Vaṭa-kuṇḍa and numerous other ponds. There used to be a grove (*kyārī*) of banyan trees here.

Ṭer-kadamba

This place is situated exactly half-way between Nandagaon and Jāvaṭa. Being a place of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-lilā*, a platform has been constructed here in memory of this pastime.

While grazing the cows in the afternoon, Kṛṣṇa used to climb this *kadamba* tree and call Śyāmālī, Dhaulī, Pītāmbārī, Kāliṇḍī and His other dear cows with His flute. Hearing Kṛṣṇa's call, all the cows would assemble here immediately, and Kṛṣṇa would count them on His jewelled necklace. If some cows were missing, He would again



Ṭer-kadamba

call out their names by sounding His flute, and only when they were all assembled would He return home with the herd.

Sometimes, in the gentle light of the full-moon night, Kṛṣṇa would climb this *kadamba* tree and call the *sakhīs* by playing their names on the sweet notes of His flute. These *gopīs* would forget their bodies, minds and worldly cares, arriving to meet Kṛṣṇa in a spell-bound condition. They would then perform *rāsa* with Kṛṣṇa, which was full of singing and dancing.

Since Kṛṣṇa climbed a *kadamba* tree and with His call (*ṭer*) gathered the cows and *gopīs* here, this place is known as Ṭer-kadamba. There used to be many *kadamba* trees here, but they have all disappeared on account of stagnant rainwater. Great souls who perform *bhajana* here periodically plant *kadamba* trees at this place.

On the day of Gopāṣṭamī, the Vrajavāsīs bring small Vrajavāsī boys dressed like Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma from Nandagaon to this place and stage a programme of congregational singing called *samāja*. They also worship the cows beautifully and feed them grass and jaggery.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

Adjacent to Ṭer-kadamba, to the west, is the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. He often performed *bhajana* here at this secluded place, remembering Kṛṣṇa's sweet pastimes. He also composed many of his treasured books here. Whenever the sentiments of deep



Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī

separation from Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who is comprised of *mahābhāva*, manifested in his heart, verses of separation would emanate from his mouth. At that time, all the leaves of the *kadamba* tree here would dry up in the fire of separation, and fall to the ground. And when the meeting of the Divine Couple manifested in his heart, he recited verses of Their meeting, and the *kadamba* tree would sprout new leaves.

Once, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī came here to meet with Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. They began to talk about Kṛṣṇa's ambrosial pastimes and became so absorbed in the narrations about Him that they forgot about the time. In the afternoon, when their absorption abated somewhat, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī thought, "It is time to honour *prasāda*, but I have nothing to offer Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī." This caused him some concern. Just then, a beautiful girl in ordinary dress came there and said to Rūpa Gosvāmī, "Bābā, My mother has sent rice, milk and sugar with Me. Quickly make sweet-rice and eat." Saying this, the girl left, only to return a short while later. "Bābā," She said, "because you are talking, you have no time to cook. I will cook for you." She collected some dry cow-dung patties that were nearby and produced a fire simply by Her breathing. In little time, She presented Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī with very sweet and fragrant sweet-rice and said, "Bābā, offer this to Ṭhākuraḥ and quickly take some yourself. I must go, or else My mother will chastise Me for being late." And the beautiful girl departed.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī offered the sweet-rice to Kṛṣṇa and placed it before Sanātana Gosvāmī. Upon eating the sweet-rice, transcendental visions (*sphūrtis*) of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa manifested in the hearts of the two brothers. They began to lament, calling out, "O Rādhā, O Rādhā!" Sanātana Gosvāmī said, "I have never tasted such sweet-rice. Rūpa, did you desire something to eat? That *kiśorī* was none other than Kṛṣṇa's dearest Śrīmatī Rādhikā. In the future, please do not trouble Her like this." Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī began to lament, understanding his fault. When he took a little

rest, Śrīmatī Rādhikā appeared in his dream and pacified him with sweet words.

Nanda-bāga

Nearby, south of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭī* is Nanda-bāga, Nanda Mahārāja's garden. This garden was full of lush green trees and creepers laden with many varieties of fruits and flowers. One of Nanda Mahārāja's cowsheds, where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma milked the cows and also practised wrestling with the *sakhās* was also here. Śrīmatī Rādhikā used to come along this path together with Her girlfriends on Her way from Jāvaṭa to Nanda-bhavana.

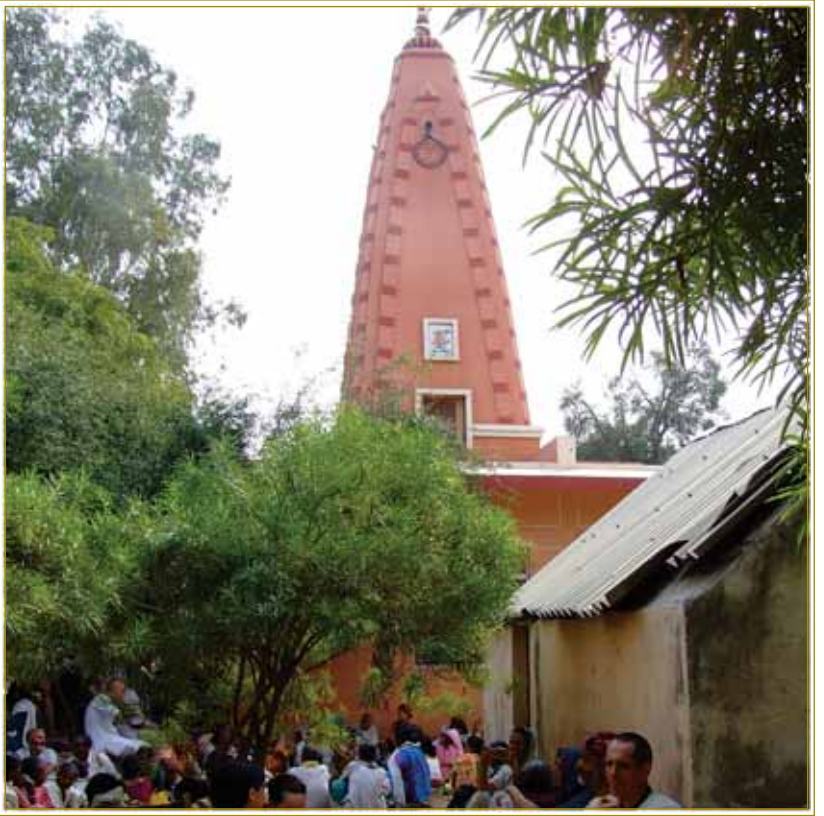
Once, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs* were coming to Nanda-bhavana to cook. Some distance from this place, they saw Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys milking the cows. Lalitā Sakhī said, "We should take the other path. Vraja's crown jewel of debauchees is looking towards us with greedy eyes while He milks the cows and He will certainly tease us in one way or another."

But Rādhikā insisted. "What can that debauchee do to us?" She said. "We should fearlessly take this path." She and Her friends proceeded to walk in Kṛṣṇa's direction. As Śrīmatī Rādhikā came close, Kṛṣṇa aimed a current of milk at Her face and drenched it. Waves of pleasure surged within the *sakhās* and *sakhīs*, and they all began to laugh. With knitted eyebrows Śrīmatī Rādhikā glared at Kṛṣṇa and continued on Her way. As She walked, somehow Her pearl necklace broke and the pearls fell to the earth, scattering here and there, so She sat down to collect them. The *sakhīs* understood Śrīmatījī's heart, and knew that on the pretext of picking up the pearls, She was actually beholding Her beloved for some time more.

Remembrance of this pastime is like an ocean, and Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī has placed many such oceans in the pot of his *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* and other books. In other words, in his books he has described these vast pastimes in a few words.

Āśiṣeśvara Mahādeva

A short distance to the east of Nanda-bāga is Āśiṣeśvara Mahādeva and Āśiṣeśvara-kuṇḍa. Parjanya Mahārāja used to bathe here and worship Āśiṣeśvara Mahādeva, who fulfils all desires. Āśiṣeśvara Mahādeva easily becomes pleased even by a little worship and bestows blessings (*āśiṣa*) by which all of one's desires may be fulfilled. Some Vrajavāsīs also say that it was by the blessings of Āśiṣeśvara Mahādeva that Parjanya Mahārāja had five sons endowed with all good qualities and had such a highly qualified grandson as Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



The temple of Āśiṣeśvara Mahādeva



Āᅇᅇᅇᅇᅇᅇ Mahāᅇᅇᅇ

Jalvihāra-kuᅇᅇᅇ

This pond lies to the west of Āᅇᅇᅇᅇᅇᅇ-kuᅇᅇᅇ. Kᅇᅇᅇᅇ and the *sakhāᅇ* played (*jal-vihāra karnā*) in Jalvihāra-kuᅇᅇᅇ.

Jogiyā-sthala

This very charming place, surrounded by trees and creepers, lies north-east of Kᅇᅇᅇᅇ-kuᅇᅇᅇ. Mahāᅇᅇᅇᅇ Śāᅇᅇᅇᅇ worships Kᅇᅇᅇᅇ here, and therefore this place is also known as Mahāᅇᅇᅇᅇ’s sitting-place (*baiᅇᅇhaka*). Once, Mahāᅇᅇᅇᅇ Śāᅇᅇᅇᅇ, desiring to have Kᅇᅇᅇᅇ’s *darᅇᅇᅇᅇᅇ*, was wandering throughout Vraja like a madman, but his repeated attempts bore no success. Sometimes, Kᅇᅇᅇᅇ would be sleeping when he arrived and sometimes He would be sucking the breast of His mother. Also, Mother Yaᅇᅇᅇᅇᅇ did not want to show her baby Kᅇᅇᅇᅇ to this strange *yogī*, whose hair was matted, who was adorned with a necklace of serpents, and who was riding a bull and carrying a trident in his hand. She thought that he might give her son the “evil eye”.

Finally, a defeated Śaṅkara sat down at this very spot firm in his decision not to leave until his desire was fulfilled. He started to beg by invoking the name of God, loudly calling out, “*Alakha nirañjana, alakha nirañjana!*” and playing on his *ḍamarū* drum. Inside Nanda-bhavana baby Kṛṣṇa also started to bawl just as loudly as Śaṅkara was calling out and playing his drum. The drum playing did not stop; nor did Kṛṣṇa’s crying. Finally, the clever elderly *gopīs* advised Yaśodā, “This must be the work of that *yogī*. He certainly knows some *mantras*, so why not call him to pacify the child?” They went to the *yogī* and said, “O *yogī*, come, Nandarānī Yaśomatī is calling you to Nanda-bhavana.” Hearing this, Śaṅkaraji became so happy and made his way to Nanda-bhavana, where he took some mustard seeds and salt in his hands, touched the head of baby Kṛṣṇa and blessed Him. When touched by the hands of Śaṅkara, Nanda-lālā immediately stopped crying and began to make sounds of joy. Seeing the *yogī*’s wonderful act, Nandarānī (Yaśodā) became very pleased with him and gave him her pearl necklace in charity, saying, “*Yogī*, you should stay here at Nanda-bhavana and, whenever my *lālā* cries, you should pacify Him by your *darśana*.”

Sūradāsa has described this pastime in the following poem, which is steeped in transcendental emotion:

*cal re jogī nandabhavan mein yasumati tohi bulāve
laṭkat-laṭkat saṅkar āvai man mein mod baḍhāve
nandabhavan mein āyo jogī rāī non kar līno
bār pher lālāke ūpar hāth śīś par dīno
vithā bhāī ab dūr badan kī kilak uṭhe nandalālā
khuśī bhāī nandajū kī rānī dīnī motiyan mālā
rahure jogī nandabhavan mein braj ko bāso kījai
jab-jab mero lālā rovai tab-tab darśan dījai
tum to jogī param manohar tum ko ved bakhāne
(śiv bole) būḍho bābā nām hamāro sūrśyām mohi jāneñ*

Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa

This very beautiful pond within a dense grove of *kadamba* trees is situated near Nandīśvara Hill to the east. Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to enjoy water-sports here with His friends. On the northern bank of this pond is the path He took to go cow grazing. Kṛṣṇa also used to bring His thirsty cows here to drink water. Chīta Svāmī has described this cow grazing pastime in a very heart-touching way:

*āgeṅ gāy pācheṅ gāy it gāy ut gāy
govind ko gāyanhoṅ meṅ basvo ko bhāvai
gāyan ke saṅg dhāveṅ gāyan meṅ sacupāveṅ
gāyan kī khur raj aṅgsoṅ lagāveṅ
gāyan soṅ vraj chāyau vaikuṅṭh hu bisrāyau
gāyan ke het kar lai uṭhāve
chīt svāmī giridhārī viṭṭhleṣ vapudhārī
gvāriyā ko bheṣ dhareṅ gāyan meṅ āve*

“The cows are in front of, behind and on either side of Govinda, who likes to sit in their midst. He runs with the cows, takes rest with them, and smears the dust of their hooves over His body. He so much relishes the company of the cows in Vraja that He even forgets Vaikuṅṭha. To protect the cows He lifted Govardhana with His own hand. The Lord of Chīta Svāmī, Giridhārī Viṭṭhaleṣa, assumes the form of a cowherd boy and appears in the dynasty of *gopas*.”

When Uddhava arrived in Nandagaon, he spent the entire night consoling Nanda and Yaśodā at Nanda-bhavana. In the early hours before dawn, he came to this pond, bathed, and sat down on the southern bank to recite his morning *mantras*. At that time, he saw the *gopīs* who were hiding in the *kadamba* grove nearby and, after completing his *mantras*, went there to meet them.

Chācha-kuṇḍa (Jhagaḍākī-kuṇḍa)

A short distance to the north-west of Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa is the place where Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* used to beg the *gopīs* for buttermilk (*chācha*). The *gopīs* would offer them this buttermilk with love. Sometimes, the boys used to fight and quarrel (*jhagaḍanā*) among themselves, saying, “Let me have some first! Let me have some first!” Because this childhood pastime took place here, the name of this pond became Chācha-kuṇḍa, or Jhagaḍākī-kuṇḍa.

Sūrya-kuṇḍa

This pond lies to the south of Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa, on the right-hand side of the highway. Here, Sūrya-nārāyaṇa, the Sungod, became restless after having *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s exquisite threefold-bending form and forgot to move for some time.



Sūrya-kuṇḍa

Lalitā-kuṇḍa

To the east of Sūrya-kuṇḍa, within the lush, green forest, lies a very attractive pond. This is Lalitājī’s bathing-place. Sometimes, Lalitā, employed some cunning to bring Rādhikā here to meet with Kṛṣṇa. This pond is situated east of Nandagaon.

Once, Kṛṣṇa warned Śrīmatī Rādhikā to be cautious of Devarṣi Nārada. “Devarṣi is a sage whose nature is very complicated,” He said. “Sometimes he causes disputes between father and son, mother and father, or husband and wife. It is best to always be cautious of him.” But Śrīmatījī did not take particular heed of Kṛṣṇa’s words.

And so it happened that one day Lalitā picked *belī*, *camelī* and other flowers from the forest and began to string a beautiful garland for Kṛṣṇa. After completing it, she discarded it and began to string a new garland. She repeated this action many times. Nārada



Lalitā-kuṇḍa

was hiding behind some trees, watching this intriguing scene. He approached Lalitā and asked her about her unusual behaviour. Lalitā said, “Every time I complete the garland, I feel that it is either too short or too long for Kṛṣṇa. This is why I keep starting again.”

The mischievous Nārada suggested, “Kṛṣṇa is playing nearby. Why don’t you make Him sit beside you and string your garland by measuring it against Him?” Lalitā agreed and called for Kṛṣṇa. She strung a beautiful garland for Him that was just the right size, and placed it around His neck. They then waited for Rādhājī, who had earlier asked Lalitā to make the garland, telling her that She would be there soon. However, Rādhājī was delayed by the *sakhīs* who were busy decorating Her.

Previously, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had promised Nārada to give him *darśana* of Him swinging with Lalitā, and now Nārada reminded Kṛṣṇa of His promise and repeatedly requested Him to sit with Lalitā on a nearby swing. They both sat down and swung back and forth as they waited for Rādhikā. In the meantime, Devarṣi went to Śrīmatī Rādhikā, singing, “All glories to Lalitā-Kṛṣṇa, all glories to Lalitā-Kṛṣṇa!” Śrīmatī Rādhikā respectfully greeted Devarṣi Nārada and inquired, “Devarṣi, today you are very happily singing the glories of Lalitā and Kṛṣṇa. It seems that you have some astonishing news. What is it?” Nārada smiled. “Aah, what a beautiful scene,” he said. “Kṛṣṇa, wearing a beautiful garland of forest flowers, is swinging with Lalitā. If You do not believe me, then go there and see for Yourself.” Śrīmatījī did not believe him, but still, She went there. “How could He possibly be swinging with Lalitā in My absence?” She thought, but from afar, She could see Kṛṣṇa and Lalitā on the swing. She angrily returned to Her *kuñja* and sat down, deeply immersed in a sulky mood, or *māna*.

Having waited a long time for Rādhājī, Kṛṣṇa finally went to look for Her. He told Her about Nārada’s activities and how it came to pass that He was swinging with Lalitā, and thus somehow pacified Her *māna*. He took Her to the swing, and Lalitā and Viśākhā pushed Them back and forth. This sweet pastime took

place here. Nārada-kuṇḁa and the place where Lalitā and Kṛṣṇa swung lie near this pond.

Uddhava-kyārī (Viśākhā-kuṇja)

Uddhava-kyārī, which is also known as Kadamba-kyārī, is situated a short distance from Lalitā-kuṇḁa to the south-east. Actually, this is the *kuṇja* of Viśākhā, and Viśākhā-kuṇḁa lies nearby. In this secluded and beautiful place surrounded by *kadamba* trees, Viśākhā used to arrange meetings between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes, Kṛṣṇa also used to perform the *rāsa* dance here with Rādhājī and Her friends. There is a platform here reminding us of that pastime. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa also enjoyed many kinds of water-sports in the clear and fragrant water of Viśākhā-kuṇḁa.

After Śrī Kṛṣṇa's departure to Mathurā, all of Vraja drowned in an ocean of separation from Him. What to speak of the *gopas* and *gopīs*, even the birds and animals gave up eating and drinking,



Viśākhā-kuṇḁa at Kadamba-kyārī



Uddhava-kyārī

feeling distressed in separation from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa's beloved *gopīs* followed Akrūra's chariot to this point and then fell to the ground unconscious. They never returned home again. Grievously afflicted by separation from Kṛṣṇa, Rādhājī stayed in this dense forest in seclusion. In the hope of Kṛṣṇa's return, She counted each passing day, remaining on the verge of death. At that time, Kṛṣṇa's messenger Uddhava came here to console the *gopīs* but, upon seeing Śrīmatī Rādhikā's state of separation, he paid his respects to Her from afar, unable to say anything.

Acutely afflicted by separation, Śrīmatī Rādhikā saw a bumblebee and thought it to be Kṛṣṇa's messenger. In the state of *divyonmāda*², She started manifesting *citrajalpa*, *prajalpa* and other moods of transcendental madness. Sometimes She chastised the bee, and sometimes She complained to it. Sometimes She gave the bee instructions, sometimes respects and sometimes She inquired from it about the well-being of Her beloved. Uddhava was amazed to see and hear all this. He had come as a teacher to give instructions,

but instead he became a student. To console the *gopīs*, he relayed some of Kṛṣṇa’s messages to them, but this only intensified their pain of separation. They said, “*Udho man na bhayo das bīs, ek huto so gayo śyām saṅga, ko ārādhe īśa* – Uddhava, we do not each have ten or twenty hearts. We had only one, which has now gone away along with Śyāma. With which heart shall we now worship God?” They also said, “*Udho joga kahān rākheṅ yahān rom rom śyām hai* – Uddhava, how can we perform *yoga* when Śyāma already pervades every particle in our bodies?”

In the end, Uddhava desired to take birth in Vraja in the form of a small shrub, creeper or blade of grass so that he could be blessed with the dust of the *gopīs*’ feet. He worshipped their foot-dust as follows:

*āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syām
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhīnām
yā dustyajam̐ sva-janam̐ ārya-ṭhañca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-padaṁ śrutibhir vimṛgyām*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.61)

“If I become a shrub, creeper or medicinal herb here in Vṛndāvana, it will be my great fortune. I shall then be able to serve the dust of these *gopīs*’ feet, and will be blessed by bathing in that foot-dust. These *gopīs* are the most fortunate of all. They have given up those things that are extremely difficult to renounce – their relatives, religious principles prescribed in the Vedas, and acceptable social conduct. Having become so completely absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, they have obtained His supreme *prema* and become as worshipful as He is.”

*vande nanda-vraja-strīṅām
pāda-reṇum abhikṣṇaśaḥ
yāsām hari-kathodgītām
punāti bhuvana-trayam*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.63)

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“I bow down to the dust of the feet of the *gopīs* residing in Nanda Bābā’s Vraja. Oh, whatever these *gopīs* have sung about Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes is purifying the whole world and will continue to do so.”

This pastime place is filled with the *rasa* of topmost meeting (*mahā-sambhoga*) and at the same time, it is filled with the *rasa* of the highest degree of separation (*mahā-vipralambha*). The life of a *sādhaka* becomes successful by taking *darśana* of and touching this place.

Pūrṇamāsī’s cave

To the south-east of Viśākhā-kuñja, or Kadamba-kyārī, and about one mile from Nandagaon is the pond and cottage of Pūrṇamāsī. At the time of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, she lived at this secluded place away from the village as an old ascetic wearing saffron cloth. Nanda and the other Vrajavāsīs had great respect for her and took her blessings before undertaking any important activity. Before coming to Vraja, Pūrṇamāsī lived in Avantīpurī with her husband and her son, Sāndīpani Muni. Madhumaṅgala and Nāndīmukhī are Sāndīpani Muni’s son and daughter. Pūrṇamāsī came to Nandagaon before Kṛṣṇa’s birth with her grandson Madhumaṅgala and granddaughter Nāndīmukhī. Every morning, she came to Nanda-bhavana to see Kṛṣṇa and bless Him. In Kṛṣṇa’s manifest pastimes (*prakāṣa-līlā*) she is Nārada’s disciple. She is the personification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s collective pastime-potency (*samaṣṭi līlā-śakti*), which belongs to the *svarūpa-śakti*, and she nourishes all of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.

Nāndīmukhī’s place of residence

Near Pūrṇamāsī’s cave is the place of residence of Nāndīmukhī, the granddaughter of Pūrṇamāsī, who also supports and nourishes Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in various ways.

ḁomanavana and Runakī-Jhunakī-kuṇḁa

Adjacent to Pūrṇamāsī's cave is ḁomanavana, which is also the location of Runakī-Jhunakī-kuṇḁa. The word *ḁomana* means “by two minds”. Rādhā's mind and Kṛṣṇa's mind met here, and therefore this place is known as ḁomana. The *kuñja* of the two *sakhīs* Runakī and Jhunakī lies here. These two *sakhīs* used to arrange Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's meeting here by using various tricks. With great happiness, they would sit Them on the swing and swing Them.

One devotee has described this pastime in his poem full of *prema*:

*it soṅ āi kumri kiśorī ut soṅ nandakiśor
do mil van krīḁā karat bolat pañchī mor*

“Kumārī Kiśorī came from one direction and Nanda-kiśora from the other. They are playing together in the forest, accompanied by the calls of the peacocks.”

Endnotes

¹ *yatra nandopanandāste
prati nandādhinandanāḁ
cakrurvāsāḁ sukhasthānaḁ
yato nandābhidhānakam*
Ādi Purāṇa

² A wonderful, divine state that resembles delusion. This state is virtually only in Śrīmatī Rādhikā. One manifestation of *divyonmāda* is *citra-jalpa*, which induces Śrīmatī to speak nonsensically, as when She addresses a bumblebee in the presence of Uddhava.



*“Sometimes, rasika
Śrī Kṛṣṇa would adorn
His chest here with
the red lac, or jāvaka,
from Śrī Rādhikā’s
lotus feet. This place,
which is decorated with
a vaṭa (banyan) tree is
renown as Jāvata or
Yāva-grāma.”*





Jāvaṭa







āvaṭa, or Yāva-grāma, lies approximately two miles east of Nandagaon, and is one of the places where the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa perform highly confidential pastimes. It is not possible to describe all the pastimes that took place here. Sometimes, *rasika* Śrī Kṛṣṇa would adorn His chest here with the red lac, or *jāvaka*, from Śrī Rādhikā's lotus feet. This place, which is decorated with a *vaṭa* (banyan) tree is renown as Jāvaṭa or Yāva-grāma.¹

The *goṣī* Jaṭilā used to live in this village with her son Abhimanyu and daughter Kuṭilā. Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu married his beloved daughter, Śrī Rādhikā, to Jaṭilā's son Abhimanyu on the instruction of Yogamāyā Purṇamāsī. Although Abhimanyu had the conception that he was Śrī Rādhikā's husband, by the power of Bhagavatī Yogamāyā he could not even touch Her shadow. Instead, out of shyness, he always busied himself by looking after his cows in the cowshed or spending time with his

friends. Jaṭilā and Kuṭilā remained wholly occupied in household chores. On various deceptive pretexts the clever *sakhīs* would arrange meetings between Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Actually these meetings were brought about by Yogamāyā to nourish the *rasa* of paramour love, because Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the embodiment of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pleasure giving potency (*hlādinī-śakti*), and the crown jewel of Kṛṣṇa's eternal beloveds. Fire and its power to burn, or the sun and its light, are intrinsically one in nature and cannot be separated from each other. Similarly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His *parā-śakti* Śrī Rādhā are eternally non-different and inseparable from each other; They are one soul manifest in two forms solely to taste *rasa-vilāsa*. Rāvaṇa could not so much as touch the original Sītā. He was only able to kidnap her shadow. One can reconcile Abhimanyu and Śrīmatī Rādhikā's relationship in the same way.

Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu built a beautiful royal palace for his darling daughter in Jāvaṭa, in which Śrīmatījī lived happily with Her girlfriends. Every morning, Mukharā used to come here to see her beloved granddaughter. *Bhakti-ratnākara* gives charming accounts of the pastimes that took place here.²

One day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa could not meet with Rādhikā because She was in *māna*. He became most agitated in separation from Her, so on the advice of Viśākhā, He disguised Himself as a *brāhmaṇa* student. He donned a sacred thread across His shoulder and wooden shoes on His feet. Carrying a begging bowl and staff in His hands and a book under His arm, He arrived at the door of Jaṭilā's house in Jāvaṭa and began begging by calling out God's name. Since it was morning time, Jaṭilā and Kuṭilā were making cow-dung patties and had not yet bathed. Because they were not clean, they could not give any alms in charity. They therefore called for Rādhikā and ordered Her to give alms to the *brāhmaṇa*, but Rādhikā refused to come before any man other than Her husband. The beggar boy had His own unique style. "Mother," He said, "I cannot stay here very long. I can only wait for as long as it takes to milk a cow and no longer. It is already time for Me to go."

Jaṭilā thought, “If this young *brāhmaṇa* leaves empty-handed, it will not be at all auspicious for my family and the cows or any of my family members may die.” She entered the house and in a gentle way explained the situation to her daughter-in-law, repeatedly requesting Her to give the mendicant some alms. She then returned to make cow-dung patties. Śrīmatī Rādhikā covered Her face with Her veil and carried a plate of flour, lentils and vegetables to the door. Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs* accompanied Her. When She tried to offer them to the beggar, He humbly petitioned Her, “I have no need for these alms. Please place Your precious *māna* in My begging bowl.” Now Priyājī understood everything. She smiled, uncovered Her face a little and emptied the whole plate on top of His head. Delighted, the young beggar went His way, meditating upon the alms He had just received from Rādhikā.

The following pastime also took place here. Once, Mother Yaśodā was in her storeroom, organising some skirts, blouses, shawls and other expensive clothes and ornaments to be placed in a large chest, when mischievous Kṛṣṇa burst into the room. He came up behind her, put His arms around her neck and insisted on knowing what she was doing. “Maiyā, is it My birthday today?” He asked. “Are you preparing all of these clothes and ornaments for Me?”

“Go and play now,” Maiyā answered with some irritation. “Do not disturb me.” Kṛṣṇa felt somewhat dejected and left, only to observe what His mother was doing from a hidden place. Mother Yaśodā was preparing this box to send to Śrīmatī Rādhikā in Jāvaṭa. She would occasionally send such gifts to please the hard-hearted Jaṭilā, so that she would not prohibit her daughter-in-law from coming to Nanda-bhavana. Clever Śrī Kṛṣṇa understood this fact, so when His mother finished packing the chest and became absorbed in other household chores, Kṛṣṇa made His way with Subala Sakhā to the room in which the chest lay. They unlocked it and removed its contents, and Kṛṣṇa climbed inside. Subala closed the lid and locked it as before.

Yaśodā had requested Abhimanyu to personally come and collect the box because it was filled with expensive gifts and should not be given to anyone else. Abhimanyu put the box on his head and with great difficulty carried it to his mother in Jāvaṭa-grāma. Jaṭilā said, “My son, this box is filled with very expensive clothes and ornaments for my daughter-in-law, so put it in Her room.” He happily placed the box in Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s room and left. When the *sakhīs* eagerly opened the box and saw the mischievous Śyāmasundara inside, they burst out laughing. Their bliss knew no bounds. With intense *prema*, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa met, which filled the *sakhīs* with great satisfaction.

Once, Śrīmatī Rādhikā was in *māna* and did not meet Kṛṣṇa for several days. The *sakhīs* tried various means to convince Her to give up Her *māna*, but on this occasion Her *māna* was fixed and therefore difficult to subdue. Kṛṣṇa’s separation from Rādhā filled Him with great distress. Subala Sakhā therefore began to hatch a plan to help Him meet with Rādhā. Subala exactly resembles Śrīmatī Rādhikā in age, beauty, speech and so forth and is skilled in many arts. He consoled Kṛṣṇa, saying, “Why are You so distressed? You should wait in this *kuñja* for a short time while I arrange Your meeting with Priyāji.” Saying this, he went to Yāva-grāma. When Jaṭilā saw him there, she cried out, “Subala, you are the friend of that licentious debauchee Kṛṣṇa; why are you hovering around our house? Leave this place immediately.”

Subala replied, “Maiyā, one of my calves is lost and I cannot find it anywhere. I have come to search for it.”

“Your calf has not come here,” Jaṭilā answered. “Leave at once.” Subala repeatedly requested her to please allow him to look for his calf, and she finally relented. “I am going now to make cow-dung patties. Go to the cowshed and search for your calf, and if you find it, take it.”

Subala became delighted and reached Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s balcony through the cowshed. He gave such a heart-rending description of Kṛṣṇa’s condition of separation that Śrīmatīji’s heart melted. She

immediately gave up Her *māna* and prepared Herself to go and console Kṛṣṇa, but how would She be able to leave Her house? Subala then gave Her his clothes and She disguised Herself as him, carrying a stick and wearing a twisted turban on Her head, a *dhotī* around Her waist, and a necklace of *guñjā*-seeds around Her neck. Carrying a small calf in Her arms, She appeared to be Subala happily leaving, having found his lost calf. She held the calf in such a way that no one would notice Her breasts and become suspicious. Meanwhile, Subala, disguised as Rādhikā, became immersed in conversation with the *sakhīs*. When Jaṭilā saw Śrīmatījī disguised as Subala leaving the cowshed, she asked, “So, did you find your calf?”

Rādhikā answered in Subala’s voice. “Just see, Maiyā,” She said, “I have found it.” Jaṭilā did not become even the slightest bit suspicious. Śrīmatī Rādhikā finally reached Kṛṣṇa, having made Her way to the location as indicated by Subala. Distressed in separation, Kṛṣṇa asked Her, “*Sakhā*, were you unable to bring My beloved? My life is coming to an end. What should I do? Where should I go?” Upon seeing Kṛṣṇa in such a miserable condition, Śrīmatījī could not contain Herself. She put the calf down and embraced Him. By Her tender touch and by the fragrance of Her body, Kṛṣṇa understood everything and all His sorrow went far away. He repeatedly praised the intelligence of Subala, and proceeded to enjoy delightful pastimes with His beloved. After some time, Subala also arrived there and became so happy to watch Their meeting.

Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s desire to meet Rādhikā was so intense that He became very restless. That evening, with the hope of meeting Rādhikā, He went to Jāvāṭa and waited outside Jaṭilā’s mansion under a *ber* tree. Climbing upon a branch of that tree, He started cooing like a black cuckoo (*kokila*). Śrīmatī and Her girlfriends understood that this *kokila* was none other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *ber* tree eagerly awaiting a meeting. However, whenever Kṛṣṇa tried to enter the house, the vigilant Jaṭilā, hearing a sound, would call

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out, “Who is there?” and Kṛṣṇa would again hide in the bushes. This continued all night long, and thus Kṛṣṇa’s attempts to meet with Śrīmatī Rādhikā were repeatedly foiled. In the end, He gave up hope and left, dejected.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī has described this incident in his book *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* (1.16):

*saṅketi-kṛta-kokilādi-ninadam kaṁsa-dviṣaḥ kurvato
dvāronmocana-lolaṅkhavalaya-kvāṇaṁ muhuḥ śṛṇvataḥ
keyaṁ keyaṁ iti pragalbha-jarati-vākyena dūnātmano
rādhā-prāṅgaṇa-koṇa-koli-viṭapi-kroḍe gatā śarvarī*

In this verse, one *sakhī* is describing Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s *parādhīnatā*³ of the previous night to her dear friend: “Last night, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was standing under a *ber* tree in Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s courtyard, cooing like a *kokila* again and again. Śrīmatījī understood His signal but, whenever She went to open the door, Her bangles and ankle-bells made such a loud sound that even Śrī Kṛṣṇa heard them. From inside the house, haughty old Jaṭilā



Śrī Vāva-grāma

would repeatedly call out, ‘Who is there?’ Hearing her loud call, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with a distressed heart, spent the whole night under that *ber* tree.”

May Śrī Yāva-grāma be victorious as it conceals so many sweet memories.

Jaṭilā’s house (Jaṭilā kī Havelī)

In the western part of the village, on a high hillock, is the large house of Jaṭilā, in which there are deities of Jaṭilā, Kuṭilā and Abhimanyu. Now a temple of Śrī Rādhā-Kāntaji is also there. The *sakhīs* arrange meetings between Śrīmatīji and Kṛṣṇa here by deceiving Jaṭilā, Kuṭilā and Abhimanyu.



Jaṭilā, Kuṭilā
and Abhimanyu

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Jaṭilā's house



Śrī Rādhā-Kāntajī

The cowshed (Vatsakhora)

On the pretext of having lost his calf, Subala Sakhā deceived Jaṭilā and sent Śrīmatī Rādhikā, disguised as him, to meet with Kṛṣṇa. Even today, this cowshed of Abhimanyu is known by the name Vatsakhora.

Beriyā

Beriyā is situated near the cowshed. Within the dense *kuñjas* here was a *ber* tree. Once, Kṛṣṇa waited here all night long to meet with Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Pānihārī-kuṇḍa

North of Beriyā is Pānihārī-kuṇḍa. The *gopīs* used to come here to fetch water. *Pāni* means “water”, and *hārī* means “taking”. Sometimes, Kṛṣṇa met with the *gopīs* here.

Mukharā’s pathway

Every morning, Mukharā joyfully trod this path to visit her granddaughter Rādhikā and bestow blessings upon Her. She would then return by the same path.

Kuṭilā dūṣaṇa-sthāna

This is where Jaṭilā’s daughter Kuṭilā, due to her wicked nature, would always direct all kinds of accusations at Śrīmatī Rādhikā. She would falsely accuse Rādhikā of various transgressions. Once, she saw Rādhikā meeting with Kṛṣṇa at this place. She locked Them inside a room and created an uproar by which she was able to gather together Pūrṇimā, her mother Jaṭilā, her older brother Abhimanyu and her younger brother Durmada. She announced to them that she had locked her disgraced sister-in-law in this room together with Kṛṣṇa. When the door was opened, however, everyone saw Rādhājī worshipping a deity of Kālī. What happened next? They all began to chastise Kuṭilā for making false accusations. Kuṭilā pulled a long face and walked away. [*Dūṣaṇa* means “disgracing” or “dishonouring”.]

Rādhikā's pathway (Rādhikā gamana-patha)

Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs* used this path to go to worship the Sungod and to return. Along the road is a *kadamba* forest (Kadamba-kānana), where Kṛṣṇa would eagerly approach Rādhikā. As She tried to escape, He would tug at the corner of Her cloth to stop Her. This pastime is described in *Bhakti-ratnākara*.⁴

Pivana-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* lies in the middle of Kadamba-kānana, where the eager Kṛṣṇa, guided by the *sakhīs*, drank the nectar of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's lips. This *kuṇḍa* is therefore called Pivana-kuṇḍa (*pinā* means "to drink"). This *kuṇḍa* is the witness to the Divine Couple's amorous pastimes. *Bhakti-ratnākara* describes this incident.⁵

Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa

This pond, which is surrounded by dense banyan trees, provides a concealed setting for various pastimes of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. It lies in the southern part of Jāvaṭa.

Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇa came here to swing with Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her girlfriends under these closely-packed banyan trees. That day the *sakhīs* were late in arriving here, so *rasika* Kṛṣṇa considered what act of naughtiness He could perform. Without waiting for the *sakhīs*, He Himself hung a swing from the branch of a tree and asked Śrīmatījī to sit on it. Yet the swing was so high that She was unable to climb up on it. On the pretext of helping Her on to the swing, Śrī Kṛṣṇa lifted Her up in His arms and embraced Her. Thus, even before the swing-festival began, the Youthful Couple submerged Themselves in waves of delight. At that moment, the *sakhīs* arrived at this swing-festival, laughing and joking, and they too drowned in delight.

Lāḍalī-kuṇḍa

At this place, Lalitājī secretly arranged meetings between Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala.

The place where a boon was given (situated near Nārada-kuṇḍa)

Here, Durvāsā Ṛṣi gave Śrīmatī Rādhikā the boon that whatever She cooked with Her own hands would at once become like divine nectar (*amṛta*), and whoever partook of this food would become immortal, invincible, greatly valiant and able to defeat everyone, including demigods and demons. This narration is found in *Padma Purāṇa*.

The path to go cow herding (Gocāraṇa-patha)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* used this path to go cow herding and to return home. At this time, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, unseen by all others, would meet with each other. The following verse by Śrī Śāradākāra found in *Śrī Padyāvalī* reveals the beauty of Śrī Kṛṣṇa when going cow herding:

*phullendīvara-kāntim indu-vadanam barhāvataṁsa-priyam
śrī-vatsāṅkam udāra-kaustubha-dharam pītāmbaram sundaram
gopīnām nayanotpalārcita-tanum go-gopa-saṅghāvṛtam
govindam kala-veṇu-vādana-param divyāṅga-bhūṣaṁ bhaje*

“I worship Govinda, whose complexion is the colour of a blossoming blue lotus, whose face is like the moon, who is fond of wearing a peacock feather in His crown, whose chest bears the mark of Śrīvatsa and is adorned with the Kaustubha gem, who is attired in beautiful yellow garments, whose handsome form the *gopīs* worship with sidelong glances, whose companions are multitudes of cows and *gopas*, who plays sweet melodies on the flute, and whose body is decorated with glittering ornaments.”

Kiśorī-kuṇḍa, or Rādhā-kuṇḍa

In the eastern part of Jāvāṭa are a temple of Kiśorījī and Kiśorī-kuṇḍa. Sometimes, Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to play in the water of this *kuṇḍa* with Śrī Rādhikā and the *sakhīs*. This *kuṇḍa* is sprinkled with the *kuṅkum*, saffron and other cosmetics from the bodies of the *sakhīs*

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and is still decorated with the memories of these pastimes, which are full of sweetness (*mādhurya*).

Rāsa-manḍala

Here, Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs*, being overwhelmed with *prema*, performed *rāsa* and other pastimes with the seven-year-old Kṛṣṇa.⁶

The place of Padmāvati's wedding (Padmāvati vivāha-sthala)

In this place, the jovial girls of Vraja celebrated the wedding of Candrāvati's *sakhī* Padmāvati with Nanda-nandana. The heart of *kiśorī* Śrīmatī Rādhikā is very liberal. On Her indication, Lalitā and the other *sakhīs* decorated Padmāvati as a bride and seated her on Kṛṣṇa's left. The *sakhīs* then tied the corner of Padmāvati's veil with Kṛṣṇa's yellow cloth and began singing wedding songs. Padmāvati felt very shy as she gazed upon Kṛṣṇa.

Cira-kunḍa and Hiṇḍolā-sthāna (the place of the swing)

These very attractive places are situated near Kiśorī-kunḍa.

Pārāla-Gaṅgā

This place lies in the north-western part of Jāvaṭa. Śrīmatī Rādhikā manifested a stream of Bhagavatī Gaṅgā here. It is said that this Pārāla-Gaṅgā is a pond endowed with transcendental power. On the western bank of this pond is an ancient *pārijāta* tree, which blossoms in the month of Vaiśākha (March–April). It is accepted that this tree was planted by the hands of Rādhā Herself and still exists today.



Endnotes

- ¹ rādhā pādatalādyatra
jāvakaḥ svalato 'bhavat
yasatājīva vaṭam nāma
vikhyātam pṛthvi tale
Bṛhad Gautamīya
- ² abhimanyu rahe nija go-gopa-samāje
jaṭilā kuṭilā sadā rahe gṛhakārye
sakhī sucaturā kṛṣṇe āniyā ethāye
doṅhāra vilāse dekhe ullāsa hiyāya
jaṭilā, kuṭilā, abhimanyu bhāḍāiyā
vilāse kautuke kṛṣṇa ethāi āsiyā
mukharā nātinī ethā dekhiyā ullāse
jaṭilāra prati kata kahe mṛdubhāṣe
eī khāne kuṭilā haiyā mahāharṣa
rādhikāya dūṣite karaye parāmarṣa
eī pathe rādhikā calena sūryālaye
kadamba kānane rahi kṛṣṇa nirikhaye
pathe āsi rādhikāra vastra ākarṣaya
rāikānu dohāra kautuka atiśaya
Bhakti-ratnākara
- ³ Being under Jaṭilā's vigilant eye,
Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were unable to
meet. They were thus *parādhīnatā*,
or “under control”. The *prema*
that manifest at this time is called
parādhīnatā prema.
- ⁴ kadamba kānane
rahi kṛṣṇa nirikhaye
pathe āsi rādhikāra
vastra ākarṣaya
rāi kānu dohāra
kautuka atiśaya
Bhakti-ratnākara
- ⁵ e pīvana kuṇḍa nadī
kadamba kānane
sukhe rādhākṛṣṇa
vilāsaye sakhisane
parama kautukī kṛṣṇa
sakhī ṅgita pāiyā
rādhikāra adhara sudhā
piye matta haiyā
Bhakti-ratnākara
- ⁶ yatra rādhā-karodrāsam
kṛṣṇena saha vihvalā
sapta-varṣa svarūpeṇa
sakhībhir-bahudhā sukham
Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa



*“While Śrī Kṛṣṇa sat
on Ākrūra’s chariot, waiting
to depart, He became disturbed
upon seeing the condition of the
gopīs in their mood of separation.
To pacify them, He told them,
‘I promise that I will surely
return the day after tomorrow.’
The day after tomorrow is called
parson in Hindī; hence the name
of this village became Parson.”*





KOKILĀVĀṆA

& OTHER PASTIME PLACES







okilāvana lies three miles north of Nandagaon and one mile west of Jāvaṭa. Even today, the sweet sounds of many birds – such as peacocks, peahens, male parrots, female parrots, swans and cranes – can be heard in this protected and enchanting forest, and animals like deer and blue cows, or *nīla gāya*, can be seen wandering about. The Vrajavāsīs bring their vast herds of cows here for grazing. The sweet *kuhū-kuhū* of hundreds of cuckoo birds (*kokilas*) resounds in this forest. Although most forests of Vraja have been destroyed, this one, with a circumference of three-and-a-half miles, remains somewhat protected. According to *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa*, Ratnākara-sarovara and a *rāsa-maṇḍala* are situated in Kokilāvana.

Bhakti-ratnākara describes a magnificent pastime that took place here:

*jāvaṭera paścime e vana manohara
lakṣa-lakṣa kokila kūhare nirantara*

eka dina kṛṣṇa eī vanete āsiyā
kokila-sadṛśa śabda kare harṣa haīyā
sakala kokila haīte śabda sumadhura
ye sune bāreka tāra dhairya jāya dūra
jaṭilā kahaye viśākhāre priyavāṇī
kokilera śabda aiche kabhu nāhi śuni
viśākhā khaye – eī mo sabhāra mane
yadi kaha e kokile dekhi giyā vane
vṛddhā kahe – jāo! śuni ullāsa aśeṣa
rāī sakhīsaha vane karilā praveśa
haīla mahākautuka sukhera sīmā nāī
sakaleī āsiyā mililā eka ṭhānī
kokilera śabde kṛṣṇa mile rādhikāre
e hetu ‘kokilāvana’ kahaye ihāre

Once, the very playful Śrī Kṛṣṇa eagerly desired to meet Śrīmatī Rādhikā, but because of the obstacles created by Her mother-in-law Jaṭilā, sister-in-law Kuṭilā and husband Abhimanyu, Śrīmatī Rādhikā could not get to Their appointed meeting place. After waiting for a long time, Kṛṣṇa climbed a tall tree and sweetly began to imitate the sound of a cuckoo. Hearing the loud and delightful call of this astonishing cuckoo bird, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *sakhīs* understood that it was a signal from Kṛṣṇa and became eager and restless to meet with Him. At that time, Jaṭilā addressed Viśākhā, saying, “Viśākhā, I have heard cuckoo birds make so many beautiful sounds, but I have never heard anything like the wonderful and lengthy melody this bird sings today.” Viśākhā replied, “Dādījī, we also have never heard anything like it. This is certainly an amazing cuckoo bird. With your permission, we would like to go out and see it for ourselves.” The old woman gladly gave permission for the *sakhīs* to go. They very happily entered the forest, and thus Kṛṣṇa was able to meet with Rādhā. This is how this place became known as Kokilāvana.



The entrance to the temple at Kokilāvāṇā

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Ratnākara-sarovara



- **Ratnākara-sarovara**

The *sakhīs* brought milk from their homes to make this *kuṇḍa*. Many varieties of jewels (*ratna*) appeared from the pond that the *sakhīs* used to decorate Śrīmatī Rādhikā.¹ This pond, which destroys all sins and bestows an abundance of wealth and affluence, can give devotees the greatest jewel of all – causeless devotion for the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

• Rāsa-maṇḍala

Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed *rāsa-līlā* with the *gopīs* here, after which they played in the water of Ratnākara-sarovara.

Āñjanauka

This is Śrī Viśākhā Sakhī's place of residence. She is famous among the eight prominent *sakhīs*. Her father is Śrī Pāvana Gopa and her mother is Devadānī Gopī.² This place, situated five miles south-east of Nandagaon, is where playful Kṛṣṇa applied *kajala* (*añjana*) to the eyes of His *prāṇa-vallabhā* Śrīmatī Rādhikā. This pastime place is therefore known as Āñjanauka.

Once, Śrīmatī Rādhikā was sitting in a secluded *kuñja* with Her *sakhīs*, who were dressing and decorating Her with various ornaments and jewels. All that was left to be done was to apply *añjana* to Her eyes, when suddenly Kṛṣṇa played upon His sweet flute. As soon as Śrīmatī Rādhikā heard that sound, She became overwhelmed, and with great anticipation She left to meet Her *prāṇa-vallabha* without having applied *añjana*. Kṛṣṇa was also anxiously waiting to meet Her, and when She arrived, He sat Her on a flower-seat. He then put His arms around Her neck and His eyes eagerly drank Her beauty. When He noticed that there was no *añjana* on Her eyes, He asked the *sakhīs* why. They answered, “We had fully decorated Her except for the *añjana* but, as soon as She heard the sweet sound of Your flute, She became so eager to meet with You that She immediately ran off. Although we repeatedly requested Her to wait so that we could apply *añjana*, we were unable to stop Her.” This filled Kṛṣṇa with joy, and He applied *añjana* to Her eyes with His own hands. He then held up a mirror to let Rādhikā taste the beauty of Her form, which He also relished by looking in that mirror.

Bhakti-ratnākara says:

rasera āveśe kṛṣṇa añjana laīyā
dilena rādhikā netre mahā harṣa haīyā

KOKILĀVĀṆA & OTHER PASTIME PLACES

“Kṛṣṇa was absorbed in *rāsa* and happily applied *añjana* to Rādhikā’s eyes.”

Also situated here is a *rāsa-maṇḍala*, where *rāsa-līlā* took place. Kiśorī-kunḍa lies in the south of the village, and on the west bank of this pond is the *añjanī-śīlā* on which Śrī Kṛṣṇa seated Śrī Rādhā and decorated Her eyes with *añjana*.



Kiśorī-kunḍa



Añjanī-śīlā

Bijavārī

Bijavārī lies one-and-a-half miles south-east of Nandagaon and one mile south of Khāyaro.

When Akrūra came to take the two brothers, Śrī Rāma and Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā, They ascended his chariot here. The *gopīs*, being so distressed from their impending separation from Kṛṣṇa, cried out, “O Prāṇanātha!” and fell to the ground unconscious. At that time, it appeared as if lightening bolts (*vidyuta-puñja*) were striking the ground. The corrupted form of the word *vidyuta-puñja* is *bijavārī*.

Akrūra left Bijavārī with the two brothers, and travelling through Pisāi, Sahāra, Jainta and other villages, reached Akrūra-ghāṭa. There he bathed before finally arriving in Mathurā. Akrūra-sthāna, where you can see Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s footprint on a rock, lies between Bijavārī and Nandagaon.

Parson

While Śrī Kṛṣṇa sat on Akrūra’s chariot, waiting to depart, He became disturbed upon seeing the condition of the *gopīs* in their mood of separation. To pacify them, He told them, “I promise that I will surely return the day after tomorrow.” The day after tomorrow is called *parson* in Hindi; hence the name of this village became Parson.

Parson lies on the road between Govardhana and Varsānā, close to the village of Sī. Kṛṣṇa repeatedly told the *gopīs*, “I will soon return.” The name Sī originates in the word *śīghra*, meaning “soon”. This is described in *Bhakti-ratnākara* as follows:

*mathurā haite śīghra karibe gamana
eī hetu śīghra sī, kahaye sarvajana*

Kāmaī

Kāmaī is the birthplace of Viśākhā, who is prominent among the eight principal *sakhīs*. The village of Kāmaī lies five miles from Varsānā and four-and-a-half miles south-west of Umrāo. South of Kāmaī are the villages of Sī and Parsoñ.

Karehlā

This is the birthplace of Lalitājī. The son of Karahālā Gopī, Govardhana Malla, would sometimes stay here with his wife Candrāvalī, and sometimes they would also stay in Sakhītharā (Sakhī-sthalī) near Govardhana. Candrāvalī's father is Candrabhānu Gopa and her mother is Indūmatī Gopī. Candrāvalī is the cousin of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and they are considered sisters. Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja had four brothers – Candrabhānu, Ratnabhānu, Subhānu and Śrībhānu. Vṛṣabhānu was the eldest. Padmā and other *yūtheśvarīs* (leaders of groups of *gopīs*) stayed at this place, and would try to arrange meetings between Candrāvalī and Kṛṣṇa. Kañkaṇa-kuṇḍa, a *kadamba* grove, a swing, and the sitting-places (*baiṭhaks*) of Śrī Vallabhācārya, Śrī Viṭṭhaleśa and Śrī Gokulanātha are located here. This place is situated one mile north of Kāmaī. On Bhādra-pūrṇimā, *rāsa-līlā* is staged here in the dramatic tradition of *būdhī-līlā*³

Ludhauī

Ludhauī lies half a mile west of Pīsāi-gaon. Here Lalitā arranged for Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to meet. This place became known as Ludhauī because both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa hankered (*lubdha*) to meet each other here. Outside the village to the north is Lalitā-kuṇḍa, where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's meeting took place. On the eastern bank of this *kuṇḍa* is a temple of Lalitā-Bihārījī.

Pisāi

Once, while herding the cows, Baladeva brought water here for Kṛṣṇa, who was feeling very thirsty. Hence, this village became known as Pyāsāi, meaning “thirst came” (*pyās āi*). Tṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa and Viśākhā-kuṇḍa also lie here. Just near this village to the north-west is a beautiful *kadamba* grove. Pisāi is situated one-and-a-half miles north of Karehlā.

Sahāra

This is the residence of Nanda Bābā’s eldest brother, Upānanda. He was extremely wise and in every respect he was Mahārāja Nanda’s advisor. He loved Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa more than he loved his own life. Upānanda’s son was Subhadra, whom Śrī Kṛṣṇa respected like a real elder brother. Subhadra Sakhā, who was also extremely affectionate to Kṛṣṇa, was expert in astrology and all other arts. He zealously protected Kṛṣṇa from all types of hardships during cow herding. Subhadra’s wife was Kundalatā, who accepted Kṛṣṇa as her very life. Witty and playful, she loved to laugh and she was most expert in arranging meetings between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. On the order of Yaśodā, she would bring Śrīmatī Rādhikā with her from Jāvaṭa to cook for Kṛṣṇa.

Sāṅkhī

This pastime place lies one mile west of Narī and two miles north of Sahāra. It was here that Kṛṣṇa killed Śāṅkhacūḍa, removed the jewel from his forehead, and gave it to Śrī Baladeva.

One day, Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* were playing in the colourful Holī festival with Rādhā and Her *sakhīs* near Rādhā-kuṇḍa at the foot of Govardhana. At that time, the demon Śāṅkhacūḍa caught the *gopīs* and fled. With *sāla* trees in Their hands, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva ran after the demon to kill him. Seeing Their raging speed, Śāṅkhacūḍa left the *gopīs* and fled for his life. Kṛṣṇa left Dāu Bhaiyā to protect the *gopīs*, and He pursued the demon alone, and killed him. Kṛṣṇa then removed the jewel from Śāṅkhacūḍa’s

forehead and gave it to Baladeva, who sent it to Śrīmatī Rādhikā through Dhaniṣṭhā. Śrīmatī Rādhikā accepted that jewel with great honour.

Nearby is Rāma-kuṇḍa, which is also called Rāma-talā.

Chatravana (Chātā)

Chatravana is situated on the Mathurā–Delhī highway approximately twenty miles north-west of Mathurā and four miles south-west of Paya-gaon. Its present name is Chātā. In the north-east corner of this village lies Sūrya-kuṇḍa, and in its south-west is Candra-kuṇḍa, on whose bank a temple of Dāūjī is situated. Here, Śrīdāma and the other *sakhās* seated Śrī Kṛṣṇa on a throne and declared Him the exalted king (*chatra-pati*) of Vraja. They thus performed a wonderful unprecedented pastime here.

Śrī Balarāma sat on Kṛṣṇa's left side, and began executing the duties of minister of state. Śrīdāma held an umbrella over Kṛṣṇa's head; Arjuna fanned Him with a *cāmara*; Madumaṅgala sat in front of Kṛṣṇa and acted as court jester; Subala offered Him betel-nuts; and Subāhu, Viśāla and some other *sakhās* assumed the roles of subjects. Through Madhumaṅgala, Chatra-pati Mahārāja Kṛṣṇa proclaimed throughout the land, "Mahārāja Chatra-pati Nandakumāra is the sole emperor here. No one else has claim to any authority. Daily the *gopīs* destroy this garden; therefore, they should all be punished." In this way, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His friends sported in this playful way. In memory of this pastime, this village is named Chatravana, or Chātā.

Umrāo

This village is situated some four or five miles east of Chatravana. When the *sakhīs* heard Śrī Kṛṣṇa's proclamation, they complained to Lalitā about Him. *Bhakti-ratnākara* describes what ensued:

*lalitādi sakhī krodhe kahe bāra bāra
rādhikāra rājya ke karaye adhikāra*

*aiche kata kahi lalitādi sakhīgaṇa
rādhikāre umrāo kailā ikṣaṇa*

“Lalitā became angry and said, ‘Who is that person who dares to claim authority over Rādhikā’s kingdom? We will retaliate against Him.’ Saying this, she seated Rādhikā on a beautiful throne and pronounced Her to be the undisputed queen (*umrāva*).”

Citrā Sakhī held an umbrella over Rādhikā’s head, and Viśākhā fanned Her with a *cāmara*. Lalitā sat on Rādhikā’s left as Her minister of state. One *sakhī* offered Her betel-nuts, and the remaining *sakhīs* acted as subjects. Sitting on Her throne, Rādhikā ordered the *sakhīs*:

*mora rājya adhikāra kare yeī jana
parābhava kari tāre āna eī kṣaṇa*

Bhakti-ratnākara

“Go and defeat the person who desires to usurp My kingdom. Bind Him and bring Him before Me.”

Receiving the order of their Umrāva, thousands and thousands of *sakhīs* with flower-sticks in their hands left for battle. When Arjuna, Lavaṅga, Bhṛṅga, Kokila, Subala and Madhumaṅgala saw them approaching, they fled in all directions. One clever *sakhī*, however, caught Madhumaṅgala, bound him with a flower garland, and brought him to the lotus feet of the Umrāva. Some *gopīs* slapped Madhumaṅgala’s cheeks a few times and said, “What audacity you have to try to unlawfully seize the authority of this kingdom from our Umrāva? We will punish you right now.” Madhumaṅgala bowed his head low like a defeated general. “That is only befitting,” he said. “We concede defeat, but please hand down such a punishment that my stomach will be filled.” Mahārānī Rādhikā started to laugh and said, “This is just some gluttonous

brāhmaṇa. Release him.” The *sakhīs* filled his stomach with *laḍḍūs* and let him go.

Madhumaṅgala returned to Chatra-pati Mahārāja Kṛṣṇa and, pretending to cry, gave Him a detailed report of his humiliating detention. Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa together with Madhumaṅgala and the *sakhās* invaded Umrāo. When Śrīmatī Rādhikā saw Her *prāṇa-vallabha* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, She became quite embarrassed and quickly tried to take off Her royal dress, but the *sakhīs*, laughing, would not let Her do so. Madhumaṅgala seated Chatra-pati Śrī Kṛṣṇa on Umrāva Rādhikā’s right side. They both made a treaty in which Kṛṣṇa accepted Rādhikā’s sovereignty. Madhumaṅgala folded his hands before Śrīmatī Rādhikā and said, “The kingdom of Kṛṣṇa’s body is now under Your rule. You can take whatever You desire from Him.” Participating in this pastime filled the *sakhīs* and *sakhās* with bliss.

This village is named Umrāo after this *umrāva-līlā*, and is also known as Rādhā-sthalī, or Rādhā’s place. Pūrṇamāsī later enthroned Rādhikā here as Vrajeśvarī, the Queen of Vraja. There is also a Kiśorī-kuṇḍa here, where Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī performed *bhajana*. The worshipful deities of Lokanātha Gosvāmī, Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda, who appeared from this *kuṇḍa*, are now worshipped in Jaipura.

Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda



Dhanaśiṅga

This is the village of Dhaniṣṭhā Sakhī and lies near Umrāo. Dhaniṣṭhā Sakhī is a *kṛṣṇa-pakṣīya sakhī*, meaning she is in the group of *sakhīs* who have more affection for Kṛṣṇa than for Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Dhaniṣṭhā Sakhī is always busily engaged in various services in the home of Yaśodā. She especially performs the tasks of a messenger, arranging for Kṛṣṇa to meet with Rādhikā.

Kosī (Kosīvana)

This place is situated on the Mathurā–Delhi highway about thirty-five miles from Mathurā and some ten miles from Chatravana. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa arranged for Nanda Bābā to have *darśana* of Kuśasthalī (Dvārakā-dhāma) at Gomatī-kuṇḍa, situated west of the village.



Gomatī-kuṇḍa

Pretending ignorance and speaking in a taunting voice, Śrīmatī Rādhikā asked Kṛṣṇa, “Ko ’sī? – Who are You?” This place is therefore called Kosī or Kosīvana.

Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was so eager to meet Śrīmatī Rādhikā that He knocked on Her door. From inside the house, Śrīmatī Rādhikā asked, “Ko ’sī?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, “I am Kṛṣṇa.”

The word *kṛṣṇa* also happens to mean “black snake”. Rādhikā therefore said, “If You are a black snake, then why come here? Do You want to bite Me? Go to the forest. You have no purpose here.”

“No Priyatamā, I am Ghanaśyāma.”

Rādhikā decided to take *ghanaśyāma* to mean “black cloud”. “If You are a black cloud, then You also are not needed here,” She answered. “Do not shower rain here and muddy My courtyard. Go to the forests and fields to discharge Your rain.”

“Priyatamā, I am Cakrī.”

Cakrī also means “potter”. Rādhikā therefore said, “There is no need for a *cakrī* here. No wedding festival is being held in My house. Take Your clay pots and find a marriage celebration.”

“Priyatamā, I am Madhusūdana.”

Rādhikā intentionally took the word *madhusūdana* to mean “bumblebee” and said, “If You are *madhusūdana*, then quickly fly from here to a flower-garden and drink the nectar of the flowers. There is no flower-garden here.”

“Come on, I am Your beloved Hari,” Kṛṣṇa insisted.

Rādhikā, interpreted *hari* as “monkey” or “lion”, and laughingly replied, “What is the need of a monkey or a lion here? Do You want to scratch Me? Quickly run away to a dense forest. We are all scared of lions and monkeys here.”

In this way, Śrīmatī Rādhikā jokes with Her beloved Hari. May They be pleased with us. The place of this joking pastime is called Kosīvana.

Raṇavāḍī

The village of Raṇavāḍī lies one mile north of Ārabāḍī and three miles south-west of Chātā. Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa is directly *manmatha-manmatha*, the one who attracts even Cupid, and Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the direct manifestation of *mahābhāva*. Her function is to fulfil all of Kṛṣṇa's desires. In Raṇavāḍī, They are both absorbed in varieties of love-play with the aim of pleasing each other. *Raṇavāḍī* means "the place of amorous exchanges and playful games".

Around one hundred and fifty years ago, a Bengali *bābā* named Kṛṣṇadāsa performed *bhajana* here. One day, an ardent desire to visit all the sacred places of India awakened in his heart. Coincidentally, a *brāhmaṇa* from here was leaving for Dvārakā at that same time, and he insisted that Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī accompany him. On the way, they took *darśana* of many holy places before finally arriving at Dvārakā-dhāma.

To enter Dvārakā, one had to be branded with a *cakra*, which Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī did. After visiting other pilgrimage places, he made his way back to Raṇavāḍī, where he found, to his amazement that he could no longer absorb his mind in *bhajana*. Despite great endeavour, he was unable to remember Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eightfold pastimes of the day (*aṣṭakālīya-līlā*). This caused him great distress, so he went to see his friend Siddha Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī at Rādhakuṇḍa. When Siddha Bābājī saw Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī, he turned his face away and said, "You have been deprived of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's mercy. You have left Her exclusive shelter and have accepted the emblem of Dvārakā, and therefore the shelter of Śrī Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and the other queens of Dvārakā. As long as you are in your current body, it will be impossible for you to get Śrīmatī Rādhikā's mercy. Please leave this place at once, otherwise I will also be deprived of Her mercy."

Despondent, Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī returned to Raṇavāḍī. He closed the doors of his cottage and refrained from taking water and food. His burning separation produced in his body a fire that exploded

inside him, and within three days his material body had turned to ashes. After three days, the villagers broke open the door of his cottage, and were astonished to find ashes instead of his body. On the Amāvasyā day in the month of Pauṣa (December–January), the Vrajavāsīs of this place annually celebrate the disappearance festival of this *bābājī* with great splendour.

Narī-Semārī

The previous and correct name of this village is Kinnarī-Śyāmārī. In fact, it comprises two villages, namely Narī and Semārī. The village of Semārī, the residence of the *yūtheśvarī* Śyāmalā Sakhī, lies four miles south-east of Chātā; and one mile south of Semārī is the village of Narī.

Once, Śrīmatī Rādhikā exhibited a mood of jealous anger that seemed unbreakable. Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs* tried their level best to pacify Her, but to no avail; instead Her *māna* simply increased. Finally, Kṛṣṇa, on the advice of the *sakhīs*, disguised Himself as Śyāmārī Sakhī and, playing the *vīṇā*, arrived at that place. Upon seeing the amazing beauty of Śyāmārī Sakhī and hearing her sing in various exquisite *rāgas* to the *vīṇā*'s full range of ascending and descending notes, Śrīmatī Rādhikā became enchanted. “Sakhī, what is Your name?” She asked, “and where do You live?”

The disguised Kṛṣṇa, answered, “My name is Śyāmārī. I am a *kinnarī* from the heavenly planets.” Śyāmārī Kinnarī then played the *vīṇā* and sang so beautifully that Śrīmatī Rādhikā was overwhelmed. She was just about to put Her jewelled necklace around the neck of Śyāmārī Kinnarī, when the *sakhī* folded Her hands and made a request at Her lotus feet: “Please give Me the jewel of Your *māna*.” When Śrīmatī Rādhikā heard this, She immediately understood that this was Her dear most beloved asking Her to surrender Her precious sulky mood. Now Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were happily reunited, and the *sakhīs* were overjoyed to have arranged this reconciliation.

Narī-Semarī has taken its name from this sweet pastime: “Narī” comes from the word *kinnarī*, and “Semarī” from “Śyāmarī”. According to *Vṛndāvana-līlāmṛta*, the name Narī is the corrupted form of the word *hari*.

Another pastime also took place here. When Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva were about to leave for Mathurā, Akrūra seated Them on his chariot and quickly drove the chariot away. The *gopīs* stood watching with unblinking eyes as the chariot gradually disappeared from their vision. They continued to watch as the dust it kicked up settled to the ground. Beside themselves with grief and agony, they fell to the ground calling out, “O Hari, O Hari!” To preserve the memory of this pastime, Mahārāja Vajranābha established a village here known as Hari. Gradually, the word *hari* changed to Narī. Kiśorī-kuṇḍa, Saṅkaraṣaṇa-kuṇḍa and a temple of Śrī Baladeva are located in this village.

Khadiravana (Khāyaro)

The present name of this village is Khāyaro, and lies three miles south of Chātā and three miles south-east of Jāvata. Kṛṣṇa would come to herd His cows here. Saṅgama-kuṇḍa, where a meeting (*saṅgama*) between the *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa took place, is situated here. Lokanātha Gosvāmī performed *sādhana-bhajana* on the bank of this pond in a solitary place. Occasionally, Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī would also come here and perform *bhajana* together with Lokanātha Gosvāmī. Nearby is a very charming *kadamba* grove. Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the *sakhās* performed many kinds of childhood pastimes here. Every year when the dates (*khajūra*) ripened, Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* would come here to herd the cows and eat ripe dates.

Once, Bakāsura, a demon sent by Kāmsa, appeared here as a huge crane to swallow Kṛṣṇa. He opened wide his massive beak, his lower beak touching the ground, and his upper beak touching the sky, and then ran at Kṛṣṇa with great speed to swallow Him. When

KOKILĀVĀṆA & OTHER PASTIME PLACES



Saṅgama-kuṇḍa



Lokaṅātha Gosvāmī's place of sādhanā-bhājana

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all the *sakhās* saw this fearful form, they became filled with fright and began to shout, “*Khāyo re, khāyo re!* – He will eat Kṛṣṇa, he will eat Kṛṣṇa!” But Kṛṣṇa remained fearless. He put His foot on the demon’s lower beak, and catching the upper beak with His hand, split it just as one might split a straw. The *sakhās* joyfully cried out, “*Khāyo re, khāyo re!* – Kṛṣṇa ate him, Kṛṣṇa ate him!” The name of this village became Khāyore because of this pastime.

This place is also called Khadeḍavana or Khadīravana, because in order to kill Bakāsura, Kṛṣṇa had to chase him. The Hindi word for “to chase” is *khadeḍnā*. This forest is also called Khadīravana because of the *khadīra* trees growing here, the astringent extract of which is used for making *pān*.

Baktharā

Situated near Jāvaṭa, this village lies between Khāyaro and Āñjanauka. It was here that Kṛṣṇa actually killed Bakāsura. This village is also called Cilli because Kṛṣṇa caught the beak of Bakāsura and split it (*cīrnā*) down the middle.

Neochāka

Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* used to eat their lunch here at midday when they were out tending the cows. Mother Yaśodā would send lunch for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and the other mothers would do so for their own sons. Kṛṣṇa and His friends would then eat in a playful mood, making lots of jokes. The word *chāka* means “light meal”, and *neochāka* means “to eat *chāka*”.

Bhaṇḍāgora

Bhaṇḍāgora is situated two miles north-west of Raṇavāḍī, and currently goes by the name of Bhādāvalī. Śrī Nanda Mahārāja’s storeroom (*bhaṇḍāra-gr̥ha*) was here. The cows were also brought here for grazing.

Khānpura

Khānpura lies one mile south of Bhādāvalī. Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhīs* ate various foodstuffs (*khādyā*) here after playing Holī in Raṇavāḍī.

Baiṭhāna (Baiṭhana)

Baḍī-baiṭhāna is situated two-and-a-half miles north of Kokilāvāna, and Choṭī-baiṭhāna is half a mile north of Baḍī-baiṭhāna. Thus, both villages lie near each other. Nanda Mahārāja, Upānanda, and all other older *gopas* would sit together here and discuss the welfare of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. A place where these kinds of discussions or consultations were going on is called a *baiṭhaka*.

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī would occasionally stay here for a few days at a time to perform *bhajana* and remember these pastimes. The Vrajavāsīs were charmed by his affectionate behaviour and would enthusiastically request him to remain here for longer, which he would do.

South-east of Baḍī-baiṭhāna is Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa, which Kṛṣṇa holds very dear. He used to bathe and play here with the *sakhās*. In Choṭī-baiṭhāna is Kuntala-kuṇḍa, where the *sakhās* used to decorate Kṛṣṇa. In Baḍī-baiṭhāna is a temple of Dāujī, and in Choṭī-baiṭhāna is a temple of Sākṣī-Gopālājī.

Baḍokhora

The present name of this village is Baindokhara, but was previously called Baḍokhora. It is situated west of Baiṭhāna. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed pastimes here, behind the closed doors of a *kuñja*. Caraṇa-gaṅgā and Caraṇa-pahāḍī are located here.

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Caraṇa-pahāḍī

Caraṇa-pahāḍī

This place is located one mile north of Choṭī-baiṭhāna. It is called Caraṇa-pahāḍī because one can find Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva's footprints (*caraṇa cihna*) here, as well as imprints made by cows and *gopas*.

Once, while herding the cows, Kṛṣṇa reached this place with His entourage of *sakhās*. The cows were grazing some distance from where He stood, and the *sakhās* were also some distance away. In a playful mood, Kṛṣṇa stood under a tree on top of Caraṇa-pahāḍī in

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His charming threefold-bending form. He played such a melody on His flute that the entire hill melted upon hearing the sound. What to speak of the cowherd boys and cows, even the deer, does and other animals and birds were allured. They quickly made their way to Kṛṣṇa, leaving imprints across the melted stones. The imprints of *gopas*, deer, camels and so forth are still here. These imprints all point in one direction only, because when Kṛṣṇa stopped playing His flute, the stones regained their natural state, which meant the *gopas* and animals left no impressions behind when they went their different ways.

Bhakti-ratnākara affirms:

*śrī-kṛṣṇera pāda-padma-cihna e rahila
eī hetu caraṇa pahāḍī nāma haīla*

“This place is named *Caraṇa-pahāḍī* because Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s footprints are on top of the mountain.”

The word *caraṇa* means “foot”, and *pahāḍī* means “mountain”. Nearby is *Caraṇa-gaṅgā*, where Kṛṣṇa washed His feet.



Caraṇa-gaṅgā

Rasauli

This village lies between Caraṇa-pahāḍī and Koṭvana. Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*' famous autumnal (*śārādīya*) *rāsa* took place here.

Kāmara

Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was beside Himself with the desire to meet with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and restlessly gazed down the path along which She would appear. Finally, He called Her name on His flute. Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *sakhīs* were very attracted by that sound and they made their way to Kṛṣṇa, who was overjoyed to meet them. The *gopīs* thought to play a trick on Kṛṣṇa. Without making a sound, they picked up their beloved's black blanket (*kārī kāmara*) and hid it. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then began searching for His dear blanket. The devotee poet Śrī Sūradāsa has briefly described this pastime with much *rasa*. In this poem, Kanhaiyā is complaining to Maiyā:

*maiyā merī kāmara cor lai
 main ban jāt carāvan gaiyā sūni dekh lai
 ek kahe kānhā terī kāmara jamunā jāt bahī
 ek kahe kānhā terī kāmara surbhi khāy gāī
 ek kahe nāco mere āge lai dehuñ ju nai
 sūrdāsa jasumati ke āge ānsuvan dhār bahī*

“Maiyā, I went to the forest to graze the cows. They had wandered far away, so I put down My blanket and went after them. But while I was gone some *sakhī* quietly stole My blanket. When I returned and could not find it, I asked the *sakhīs*, ‘Where is My blanket? If you have taken it, then return it.’ One *sakhī* said, ‘Kanhaiyā, Your blanket fell in the Yamunā and is floating downstream. I saw it myself.’ Another *sakhī* said, ‘Kanhaiyā, I saw a cow eating Your blanket.’ Maiyā, tell Me, how could a kind-hearted cow eat My blanket? Another *sakhī* said, ‘Kanhaiyā, if You dance in front of me, I will give You a new blanket.’ Maiyā, these *sakhīs* are teasing Me in many

ways.” Saying this, Kanhaiyā’s eyes filled with tears. Maiyā lifted up her *lālā* and put Him to her breast.

This village is called Kāmara because Kṛṣṇa was completely immersed in *kāma*, or *prema*, here, as He eagerly waited for Śrīmatī Rādhikā. It is also named Kāmara because Kṛṣṇa called out for His black blanket, or *kāmara*.

Here one finds Gopī-kuṇḍa, Gopī-jalvihāra, Hari-kuṇḍa, Mohana-kuṇḍa, and the temples of Mohanajī and Durvāsajī.

Bāsosi

Bāsosi is situated two miles north of Śeṣaśāī. Here, the bees became intoxicated upon smelling the beautiful fragrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s limbs and hummed all around Him. The word *bāsa* means “fragrance” and thus the name of this place became Bāsosi. Here Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhīs* became intoxicated in playful pastimes. The air was filled with the fragrance of Their limbs, with the red and pink powder of the Holī festival, and with the fragrance of sandalwood.

Paya-gaon

Paya-gaon lies six miles east of Kosī. Although the mothers of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the *gopas* would daily send lunch for them, one day, their lunches arrived late. In hunger, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* went to this village and drank milk (*paya*). This village has therefore become known as Paya-gaon. North of Paya-gaon is Paya-sarovara, as well as a grove beautifully decorated with *tamāla* and *kadamba* trees.

Koṭvana

Koṭvana is situated near the Delhi–Mathurā highway in between Kosī and Hoḍal. It is four miles north and a little east of Caraṇa-pahāḍī. It used to be called Koṭarvana. Śītala-kuṇḍa and

Sūrya-kuṇḍa are places to visit here. Kṛṣṇa used to herd the cows and perform playful pastimes here.

Śeṣaśāī

This pastime place lies one-and-a-half miles south and somewhat east of Bāsoli. Kṣīrasāgara is here as a *kuṇḍa*. In a temple on the west bank of Kṣīrasāgara is a deity of Bhagavān Ananta reclining on His bed with Lakṣmī massaging His lotus feet (*śayana-lilā*).

One time, when the playful Kṛṣṇa was sporting here with Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *sakhīs*, the story about Śrī Anantaśāyī Viṣṇu somehow came up in their conversation. A strong desire to see the *śayana-lilā* of Anantaśāyī Viṣṇu arose in Śrīmatī Rādhikā's heart, so Kṛṣṇa Himself arranged for Her to see this pastime. Immersed in the mood of Anantaśāyī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa laid down on a thousand-petalled lotus in the middle of Kṣīrasāgara, and Śrīmatī Rādhikā, in the mood of Lakṣmī, massaged His lotus feet. All the assembled *gopīs* were astonished. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī



The deity of Anantaśāyī Viṣṇu

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alludes to this pastime in his *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* (verse 91): “Even though Śrīmatī Rādhikā has extremely soft limbs, when She brought Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s very soft and charming lotus feet near Her chest, She could not bring Herself to place them on it as She feared that the touch of Her hard breasts might cause Him pain. May I obtain residence in the enchanting Vraja of Śeṣaśāyī Kṛṣṇa.”⁴

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu travelled throughout Vraja, He came to take *darśana* of this place, and in doing so became filled with divine love. There is a pleasant *kadamba* forest here, and one can also take *darśana* of Prauḍhanātha and a swing. Nearby is a sitting-place (*baiṭhaka*) of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

Khāmī-gaon (Khambahara)

Khāmī-gaon is situated on the border of Vraja. To establish the boundary of Vraja, Śrī Vajranābha Mahārāja constructed a stone pillar (*khambā*) here. The village of Vanacarī is nearby. These two villages are situated on the north-west border of Vraja, four miles north-east of Hoḍal. Here, are temples of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and Mahādeva.

Khayero (Kharero)

This place lies four miles south, and a little east, of Śeṣaśāī. When Baladeva came here from Dvārakāpuri, He asked the *sakhās* for good news, or *khaira*. This place is also a pasturing-ground for the cows.

Banachaulī

This village lies two-and-a-half miles east of Kharero and four miles north-west of Paya-gaon. Kṛṣṇa performed *rāsa-līlā* here.

Ūjānī

This place is situated four miles north-east of Paya-gaon and is near the main road between Chātā and Śergarh. The word *ūjānī* means “opposite flow”. The Yamunā started flowing upstream

here upon hearing the very sweet sound of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute. This is seen even today.

Khelanvana (Śergarh)

Khelanvana lies two miles south-east of Ūjānī. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma played many kinds of games with the *sakhās* when they came here for cow herding. Śrīmatī Rādhikā also played here with Her *sakhīs*. This place is called Khelanvana because they used to play (*khelnā*) here.

Nanda Bābā resided here for some time with the *gopīs*, *gopas* and cows. Vṛṣabhānu Bābā also stayed here with his whole family and herd of cows.

Jaṭilā and Koṭilā thought themselves to be the only chaste women in Vraja, and they considered Rādhikā to be not even slightly chaste. They always spoke ill of Rādhikā and made propaganda against Her. Kṛṣṇa was aware of all this. One day, He



In the area of Khelanvana

pretended to be ill to the point of death. Yaśodājī called expert doctors and *brāhmaṇas* skilled in *mantras*, but no one was able to help. Finally, Yogamāyā Pūrṇimā arrived on the scene. She said, “If any chaste lady brings water from the Yamunā in this earthen water-pot, which has hundreds of holes, and if I then bathe Kṛṣṇa with *mantras* and with that water, then Kanhaiyā can become healthy. Otherwise, it will be impossible to save Him.” Yaśodā called Jaṭilā and Kuṭilā and requested them to bring water from the Yamunā in that special pot. They went separately to the Yamunā to fill the pot, but were unable to retain even a drop of water in it. They left the pot on the Yamunā’s shore and returned home by another path so as not to meet anyone.

Yogamāyā Pūrṇimā then advised Yaśodā-maiyā to request Śrīmatī Rādhikā to bring water in that hundred-holed pot. Upon being repeatedly requested, Śrīmatī Rādhikā finally agreed to go to the Yamunā. She successfully brought back water in that pot without spilling even one drop. Pūrṇamāsī sprinkled Kṛṣṇa with that water, and He immediately regained His health. All the Vrajavāsīs were amazed to see this wonderful incident, and Rādhikā’s chastity was praised everywhere.

Places of *darśana* here are Balarāma-kuṇḍa, Gopī-ghāṭa, Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha and Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana.

Rāma-ghāṭa

This place lies on the bank of Yamunā, two miles east of Śergarh. Its present name is Obe. Baladeva performed *rāsa-līlā* here.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had been living in Dvārakā for a long time. The Vrajavāsīs’ distress, caused by their separation from Them, was so great that Śrī Kṛṣṇa sent Śrī Baladeva to Vraja to console them. At that time, Nanda-Gokula, where they resided, was here. Baladeva spent the two months of Caitra and Vaiśākha in Nanda-Vraja, and tried His utmost to console His parents, the *sakhās* and the *gopīs*.⁵



Rāma-ghāṭa

In the end, to alleviate the agony of the *gopīs*' separation, Baladeva performed *rāsa* here, complete with dancing and singing.

At that time, Varuṇadeva induced divinely fragrant Vāruṇī, a sweet nectar found in trees, to start flowing. Baladeva and His beloveds drank this Vāruṇī and, becoming intoxicated, enjoyed the *rāsa*. To sport in the water and to quench the thirst of *gopīs*, He called Yamunā, who was flowing some distance away. When she did not come, however, He dragged her over to them with His plough. He and the *gopīs* then sported in the Yamunā's water. Even today, the Yamunā leaves her natural course and flows by Rāma-ghāṭa.

A doubt may arise as to how Baladeva could perform *rāsa* with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beloved *gopīs*. This would be wholly improper from the perspective of *rasa*. It also seems improper for Baladeva to have dragged the Yamunā with His plough, since she is a manifestation of Viśākhā, and therefore a beloved of Kṛṣṇa. Such doubts, however, arise only in the minds of those who lack knowledge of the Absolute Truth. Ordinary people cannot understand the real nature of transcendental *rāsa*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's and Balarāma's *rāsa* does not contain even the slightest trace of material licentiousness or



Rāma-ghāṭa



The deity of Baladeva Prabhu

desire for lusty enjoyment. Furthermore, Baladeva performed *rāsa* only with His own group of beloved *gopīs*. This is clear from Śrī Murāri Gupta's *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya-carita*.⁶

Yamunā is Viśākhā herself. She is a beloved of Kṛṣṇa and one of the main girlfriends of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. The Yamunā that flows into the sea is a manifestation of this Yamunā. It was this manifestation, not Yamunā herself, the beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who Baladeva dragged with the nose of His plough. In this way, one's doubt on this subject can be dispelled.

Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu came here during His tour of Vraja-maṇḍala. When He took *darśana* of this place, He became absorbed in transcendental ecstasy. Near the temple of Balarāma is an *aśvattha* tree, which is known to be a *sakhā* of Balarāma. It was here that Balarāma's *rāsa-līlā* took place.

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Brahma-ghāṭa

Near Rāma-ghāṭa lies the extremely enchanting Brahma-ghāṭa, where Brahmā worshipped Śrī Kṛṣṇa to beg forgiveness for stealing the calves.

Kacchavana

Kacchavana is near Rāma-ghāṭa. Here, Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* played as if they were tortoises (*kachuā*).

Bhūṣaṇavana

This place is situated near Kacchavana. While they grazed their cows, the *sakhās* decorated (*bhūṣita kiyā*) Kṛṣṇa here with many kinds of flowers. This place is therefore called Bhūṣaṇavana.

Guñjāvana

Nearby Bhūṣaṇavana is Guñjāvana where the *gopīs* decorated Kṛṣṇa in a wonderful way with a necklace of *guñjā* berries, and where Kṛṣṇa decorated Śrīmatī Rādhikā in the same way.



A necklace of guñjā berries

Vihāravana

Vihāravana lies one-and-a-half miles south-west of Rāma-ghāṭa. *Darśana* of the Bihārīji Temple and Vihāra-kuṇḍa is recommended. *Vraja-bihārī* Kṛṣṇa together with Rādhikā and the *gopīs* performed *rāsa* and other kinds of amorous pastimes at this charming place near Śrī Yamunā. Although most of the forests of Vraja have been cut down, Vihāravana remains somewhat protected. Even today, cuckoos sing and thousands of peacocks make their *ke-kā* sound here, and during the rainy season they dance and drop their feathers. There are many beautiful *kuñjas*, *kadamba* groves and many kinds of creepers here. When one visits this place, sweet remembrances of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes will manifest in one's heart. In the cowshed here, the very beautiful cows, jumping calves and intoxicated looking bulls awaken sweet memories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's cow grazing pastimes.



Vihāra-kuṇḍa

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A dancing peacock



Kuñjas in Vibāravana



Bihārījī

Akṣayavaṭa

Akṣayavaṭa is also called Bhāṇḍīravaṭa, and is situated two miles south of Rāma-ghāṭa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the *sakhās* played many games in the shade of this banyan (*vaṭa*) tree. They especially liked to wrestle here. Baladeva killed Pralambāsura at Akṣayavaṭa.

Once during cow herding, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma left the cows to graze in the lush, green fields and went off to play with the *sakhās*. They divided themselves into two groups, one headed by Kṛṣṇa and the other headed by Baladeva. The game they played had a rule that each boy in the group that lost had to carry the boy who had defeated him on his shoulders from Bhāṇḍīravaṭa to a fixed place some distance away and then back again. Pralambāsura, a demon sent by Kaṁsa, assumed the form of a beautiful *sakhā* and joined Kṛṣṇa's team. Kṛṣṇa knowingly encouraged the new *sakhā* to play



Akṣayavaṭa

and kept him on His team. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was defeated by Śrīdāma and Pralambāsura by Balarāma. According to the rules, Śrīdāma sat on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's shoulders and Balarāma on Pralambāsura's. Kṛṣṇa made His way towards the appointed place, but the wicked Pralambāsura ran instead to a place that was deep and isolated. After some time he assumed his hideous *rākṣasa* form. Kaṁsa had instructed him to kill Baladeva before killing Kṛṣṇa. At first, Baladeva Prabhu was uncertain about what to do but, upon receiving a clue from Kṛṣṇa, He split the head of the demon with one blow of His fist. Pralambāsura vomited blood and collapsed to the earth. When Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* arrived there, they embraced Balarāma and praised His strength and fortitude.

The following pastime also took place at Akṣayavaṭa. One day, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the *sakhīs* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa were playing together here. The *sakhīs* said to Kṛṣṇa, "Prāṇa-vallabha, You always boast

that You have defeated even expert wrestlers. But why is it that Śrīdāma defeated You?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa answered, “That is entirely untrue. No one in the whole universe can defeat Me. I have never been defeated by Śrīdāma.”

Rādhikā replied, “If that is so, then we *gopīs* are ready to wrestle with You. If You defeat us, then we will understand that You are the topmost wrestler.” The *gopīs* dressed themselves as wrestlers and Śrīmatī Rādhikā wrestled with Kṛṣṇa, easily defeating Him. The *sakhīs* clapped their hands and praised Her.

Since Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* wrestled and performed physical exercise here, the village near Akṣayaṇa is called Kāśraṇa. The word *kāśraṇa* means *kasrat karnā*, or “to perform physical exercise”. It also means *kuṣṭī karnā*, or “to wrestle”. When the ancient banyan tree that stood here disappeared, a new one was planted in its place. Note that the Bhāṇḍiravaṇa situated in Bhāṇḍiravana is a different pastime place on the other side of the Yamunā.

Āgiyārā-gaon (Ārā)

The village of Āgiyārā is situated two miles south-west of the village of Kāśraṇa. It is located in the middle of Muñjāṭavī, where Kṛṣṇa used to take the cows to pasture.

Once, Kṛṣṇa was playing with the *sakhās* in the shade of Bhāṇḍiravaṇa. Nearby, the cows drank water from the Yamunā and began to graze on the lush, green grass in the fields. In doing so, they gradually wandered off to Muñjāṭavī some distance away. It was a summer day, and the scorching heat was drying up the *muñja*⁷ plants and baking the sand on the ground. The cows had roamed off without Kṛṣṇa, and they now entered this *muñja* forest, which was devoid of water and shade. This Muñjāṭavī was so dense that they lost track of the path by which they had come. Overwhelmed with thirst and heat, the cows became restless.

In their search for the cows, the *sakhās* had also left Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and, entering Muñjāṭavī, they too became agitated by



Muñja grass

thirst and heat. It was then that the followers of the wicked Kaiṁsa set Muñjavana on fire. Within a moment, the wind had spread the fire everywhere, so that it surrounded the cows and the cowherd boys. Seeing no other means of escape, they began to cry out to Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva who heard their call and immediately went to them. “Close your eyes for just a moment,” Kṛṣṇa told them, and in that moment He swallowed the terrible forest fire. Upon opening their eyes, the *sakhās* saw that they were now standing with Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva in the cooling shade of Bhāṅḍīravṭa, the cows peacefully lying nearby chewing their cud. The *jīva* suffering in the forest fire of material existence can similarly be easily delivered from this suffering simply by taking shelter of Kṛṣṇa. Another name for Muñjāṭavī is Iṣikāṭavī. On the other side of the Yamunā is the village of Bhāṅḍīra.

Tapovana

Tapovana is situated on the bank of the Yamunā one mile east of Akṣayaṇa. Here, the young *gopīs* prayed for the fulfilment of their desire to have Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their husband. It is said that in their previous birth, these *gopīs* were the sages in the forest of Daṇḍakāraṇya who were absorbed in austerities with the desire to attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa. By the mercy of Śrī Rāmacandra, in Dvāpara-yuga they took birth from the womb of *gopīs*. The princesses of Janakapurī are also counted in this group. Like Sītā, they had wanted to marry Śrī Rāmacandra, and therefore, by His mercy, they took birth as *gopīs* in Vraja at the end of Dvāpara-yuga. This Tapovana is where these young *gopīs* performed worship to attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



The Yamunā at Tapovana

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Lalitā, Viśākhā and other eternally liberated *gopīs* are direct bodily expansions (*kāya-vyūha*) of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's internal energy; therefore, there is no need for them to perform any austerity.

Gopī-ghāṭa

This place is called Gopī-ghāṭa because here the aforementioned *gopīs* used to bathe in the Yamunā.

Cīra-ghāṭa

This pastime place lies two miles west of Akṣayaṭa. The young *gopīs* had worshipped Kātyāyanī-devī regularly for one month, observing all the vows to attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their husband.⁸

At the end of their vow, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, along with some *priya-narma-sakhās* stole the *gopīs*' clothes and gave them the benediction



Cīra-ghāṭa



*The deity of
Kātyāyanī-devī*

that their desire would be fulfilled. The temple of Kātyāyanī-devī is situated here on the bank of the Yamunā. The present name of this village is Siyāro.

Nanda-ghāṭa

Nanda-ghāṭa is situated two miles south of Gopī-ghāṭa and one mile south-east of Akṣayaṇa.

Once, Mahārāja Nanda performed an Ekādaśī-vrata and took his bath here on Dvādaśī night. This was an inauspicious time to bathe, and therefore the servants of Varuṇa captured him and brought him before their master. News of Mahārāja Nanda's disappearance in the Yamunā so distressed the Vrajavāsīs that, upon seeing their crying, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma went to Varuṇa-loka to look for him. When Varuṇadeva saw Kṛṣṇa before him, he offered prayers to Kṛṣṇa and glorified Him. He then presented Him with gifts of various ornaments made of pearls, jewels and precious



Nanda-ghāṭa

stones. He begged Kṛṣṇa to forgive him for arresting Nanda Bābā. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa returned with His father, they met again with the Vrajavāsīs at this place.

Once, in a discussion on the scriptures, Jīva Gosvāmī defeated a *digvijayī paṇḍita*, a scholar who is victorious in debate all over the world. This scholar had wanted to edit the writings of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, but the young Jīva Gosvāmī was unable to tolerate this and defeated him at the Yamunā in Vṛndāvana. The scholar then approached Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī to find out who this boy was, greatly praising the boy's erudition. With great humility, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī said, "He is my brother's son as well as my disciple." Understanding that Jīva had debated with the scholar, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī addressed Jīva as soon as the scholar had gone: "Jīva, could you not even tolerate an event as insignificant as this? Since you desire prestige, please leave this place at once."



*The location of Jīva
Gosvāmī's cave*

Dejected upon hearing the harsh disciplinary words of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī left Vṛndāvana for Nanda-ghāṭa. There, on the bank of the Yamunā, in a dense and desolate forest, he lived in a crocodile hole. He maintained his life here somehow or other with great difficulty. Feeling intense separation from his Gurudeva, sometimes he would drink flour mixed with water, and sometimes he would just fast. His body gradually dried up and became very thin. At that time, on the pretext of performing *parikramā* of Vraja, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī came to Nanda-ghāṭa. He heard from the mouths of the Vrajavāsīs the abundant glories of the young Bengali *sādhū* and his severe austerities. He went to Jīva Gosvāmī, consoled him, and took him back to Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī then went alone to meet with Rūpa Gosvāmī, leaving Jīva in his *bhajana-kuṭī*. At that time, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī was speaking to a group of Vaiṣṇavas about bestowing mercy upon the *jīvas*. Midway through this discussion, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

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asked, “You are instructing others to show mercy to the *jīvas*, but why are you not showing mercy to Jīva himself?” Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī understood the hidden meaning behind the enigmatic words of his elder brother and spiritual master, and called for Śrī Jīva. He saw to it that Jīva received medical care and engaged him in his service once again. It was while he was living at Nanda-ghāṭa that Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī composed his famous work known as the *Ṣad-sandarbhā*. Even today, the place where Jīva Gosvāmī lived is known as Jīva Gosvāmī’s cave.

Bhaiyā (Bhaya-gaon)

Seeing the servants of Varuṇa, Śrī Nanda Mahārāja became fearful (*bhaya-bhīta*). In memory of this, Vajranābha named this village Bhaya-gaon. This village lies close to Nanda-ghāṭa.

Gāṅgrālī

Gāṅgrālī is situated two miles south and slightly east of Cīra-ghāṭa. It also lies two miles north of Bhaya-gaon.

Vatsavana (Basaī-gaon)

Vatsavana lies four miles south-west of Nanda-ghāṭa. Because Brahmā stole the cows and cowherd boys here, it is known as Vatsavana or Bacchavana. The names of this place derive from the words *vatsa* and *bachḍā*, which both mean “calf”. The present name of the village is Basaī-gaon. Places of *darśana* here are the temple of Śrī Vatsa-bihārījī, the place of Gvāla Maṅḍalī, Gvāla-kuṇḍa, Haribol-tīrtha and Śrī Vallabhācārya’s sitting-place (*baiṭhaka*).

Once, while Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys were grazing the calves on the bank of the Yamunā the calves came to this forest. Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* played all kinds of games in the soft sand of the Yamunā. Four-headed Brahmā had been astonished to see Aghāsura’s soul enter Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet and become liberated. Desiring to see more of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s sweet pastimes, he stole the calves when they entered this forest and hid them in a cave.



Walking towards Vatsavana (far left)

Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys became filled with anxiety upon noticing that the calves were nowhere to be seen. Leaving the *sakhās* here, Kṛṣṇa went out alone to search for the calves. Unable to find them, He returned to the bank of the Yamunā where He had left his *sakhās*. In Kṛṣṇa's absence, Brahmā had also hidden away the *sakhās*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is all-powerful and full in the six opulences⁹ and He therefore understood Brahmā's actions. Personally assuming forms identical to His calves and cowherd boys, including their sticks, clothes, flutes, horns and so forth, He continued His pastimes as before. This went on for one year. Even Baladeva could not understand the mystery of what had occurred. Finally, after one year, Baladeva, who had observed some extraordinary occurrence, was able to understand that Kṛṣṇa had expanded Himself as the cows and cowherd boys and was performing a pastime. At that same time, Brahmā was amazed to see that the

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same calves and cowherd boys that he had put to sleep in a cave were now performing pastimes with Kṛṣṇa just like before. He was completely astonished. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then removed Yogamāyā's curtain of bewilderment. When Brahmā realized the supreme godliness (*bhagavattā*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and saw His astounding activities, he offered prostrated obeisances at His lotus feet and began to recite prayers and glorify Him.¹⁰ Brahmā prayed to take birth in Vraja-Gokula and to bathe in its dust.

Unāi (Janāi-gaon)

Unāi lies one-and-a-half miles south of Bājanā. This is where Brahmā became bewildered upon seeing Kṛṣṇa sitting and eating with his *sakhās*. In the end, Kṛṣṇa kindly removed Brahmā's bewilderment and revealed Himself to him. At that time, Brahmā saw the whole universe as *kṛṣṇamaya*, or “filled with Kṛṣṇa”. Therefore, this place is called Janāi-gaon, which is derived from the verb *jānā* meaning “to know” or “to understand”.

Bālahārā

It was here that Brahmā stole away the cowherd boys. This place is therefore called Bālahārā. *Bāla* means “boy”, and *harnā* means “to steal”.

Parkhama

This place is situated one mile west of Janāi-gaon. Seeing Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* sitting and eating together, Brahmā wanted to test His *bhagavattā*, or quality of being God. This place is therefore known as Parkhama, from the verb *parikṣā karnā*, meaning “to test”.

Sei

Sei is situated one-and-a-half miles south-east of Parkhama and four miles from Pasaulī. Brahmājī, bewildered by Kṛṣṇa's illusory energy, stole the cowherd boys and the calves and hid them in a

secret place. However, when he returned after one year, he saw that Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys were tending the calves just as before. At that time, he began to wonder if the cowherd boys and calves that he had hidden in the cave were still there (*seī*). When he saw that they were indeed still there, he doubted that they were with Kṛṣṇa. “*Kyā seī?* – Are they there?”, he wondered. By Brahmā’s saying *seī* over and over again in this way, this place became known as *Seī*. Seeing the cowherd boys and the calves together with Kṛṣṇa as before, Brahmā ascertained (*seī*), “This Kṛṣṇa is definitely the Supreme Lord Himself.”

Caumā

Being fearful, Brahmā repented and praised Śrī Kṛṣṇa with his four mouths (*cār mūkhā*) at this place; therefore, this village is called *Caumuñhā*. It lies on the Mathurā–Delhi highway one mile west of *Parkhama* and approximately eight miles from *Mathurā*. One mile from *Caumuñhā* is a very beautiful village named *Ajhaī*, where one can have *darśana* of an ancient deity of Brahmā. Today, *Caumuñhā* is simply known as *Caumā*. *Bhakti-ratnākara* affirms:

*caumuñhā grāme brahmā āṁsi kṛṣṇapāśe
karaye kṛṣṇa stuti aśeṣa viśeṣe*

“Brahmā offered prayers to Kṛṣṇa in *Caumuñhā-grāma*.”

Pasaulī

This place is also called *Sapaulī*, *Aghavana* and *Sarpasthalī*. Here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed and delivered *Aghāsura*, who had assumed the form of a python. *Pasaulī* lies two miles north-west of *Parkhama*.

Once, Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys came to this forest while grazing the cows. *Aghāsura*, the embodiment of sin (*agha*), came here intent on avenging his sister *Pūtanā*’s death. Taking the form of an enormous and fearsome python, he lay on the road, his lower jaw on the ground and his upper jaw touching the sky. His mouth looked like a cave and his tongue like the road entering

it. The cowherd boys and the calves casually entered his mouth. But he did not close his mouth because he was specifically intent on swallowing Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, however, remained behind. From a distance, He had signalled to the cowherd boys to not enter Agha's mouth, but they had fearlessly entered nonetheless, having not the slightest doubt about Śrī Kṛṣṇa's power to protect them. To rescue the *sakhās*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa now also entered Agha's mouth, which thereupon closed. Śrī Kṛṣṇa became an obstacle in Agha's throat by expanding His body so much that Agha's breathing stopped and he choked. The demon thus suffocated. Within a short time, the opening at the top of his skull burst open and a light came out and ascended into the sky.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa then glanced over the cowherd boys and calves, bringing them back to life. They all emerged from Aghāsura's mouth. Brahmā and other demigods saw the light enter Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. After Kṛṣṇa delivered Aghāsura, He returned with the cowherd boys to Vṛndāvana.

Jainta

After the killing of Aghāsura, the sound of the demigods calling out, "Let there be all victory to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all victory!" reverberated throughout the sky and the nearby forest area. In great joy, the cowherd boys joined in, and the tumultuous sound of "All victory, all victory!" filled the sky.¹¹

This place is known as Jainta because it carries the memory of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's victory over Aghāsura. *Jaya* means "victory". There is a pond here with a statue of a snake constructed in such a way that it is always visible above the water, no matter how high the water is in the pond. This place is situated three miles from Chaṭṭikarā.

Seyāno

The present name of this place is Sihonā. Upon receiving the news of Aghāsura's death, the old *gopas* and *gopīs* glorified Kṛṣṇa

again and again saying, “Kṛṣṇa seyāno hoyo gayo hai, seyāno hoyo gayo hai – Kṛṣṇa is so clever, He is so clever.” *Seyāno* means “clever” or “strong”, and thus Mahārāja Vajranābha named this place *Seyāno-gaon*. This place lies two miles from Ajhaī. One can have *darśana* here of the deities of the four Kumāras – Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanata and Sanātana.

Taraulī

This village is situated two miles north-west of Basolī, one mile east and a little north of the village of Śyāmari, and one mile east of Baraulī.

Baraulī

The villages of Taraulī and Baraulī lie side by side. They are both places of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. Piṭhara-gaon lies on the road leaving from Baraulī.

Tamālavana and Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa-ṭilā

Surrounded by a dense forest of *tamāla* trees, this is a place where Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa met and became immersed in nectar-filled loving pastimes. One time, *rasika-bihārī* Śrī Kṛṣṇa met with Rādhā and the *sakhīs* in this *tamāla-kuṇḍa*. Many kinds of creepers and vines had wound themselves around the *tamāla* trees, embracing them, and had spread over the trees to create a truly exquisite *kuṇḍa*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa pointed to one creeper and asked Priyājī, “Why is this creeper winding itself around the *tamāla* tree?”

Śrīmatī Rādhikā smilingly answered, “It is the nature of the creeper to cover the *tamāla* tree with its shoots, leaves and flowers. Although this tree has no fruit or flowers of its own, its fortune is that the creeper enhances the tree’s beauty with its own leaves and flowers.” Just then, a breeze caused the creeper to quiver, the sight of which immersed Kiśora-Kiśorī in the ecstatic mood of meeting. This Tamālavana is still present as a reminder of these pastimes.

Āṭasa

Only the Vrajavāsīs are qualified to take *darśana* of and fully relish Kṛṣṇa's sweet pastimes, which are filled with topmost bliss. Nonetheless, the four-headed Brahmā, Mahādeva Śaṅkara, Devarṣi Nārada and many great saints and sages reside in numerous pastime places in Vrajabhūmi, worshipping the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This place, called Āṭasa-gaon, is Aṣṭavakra Muni's place of worship. Āṭasa is the corrupted form of the word *aṣṭavakra*. This village lies four miles from Janāi-gaon and six miles from Vṛndāvana.

Devī-āṭasa

This village is situated one mile from Āṭasa, and is the place of Ekānamśā-devī, Kṛṣṇa's twin sister born from Yaśodā's womb. Vasudeva took her with him from Gokula to Kāṁsa's jail. When Kāṁsa received the news that Devakī had given birth to a child, he went to the jail. He snatched Ekānamśā from Devakī's lap and lifted her toward the sky in order to dash her on the ground. When she was lifted into the air, she assumed an eight-armed Durgā form, chastised Kāṁsa, and disappeared in the sky. She then reappeared at this place. Vajranābha established this village in the memory of this pastime.

Magherā

When Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva were seated on Akrūra's chariot as he was driving Them from Vraja to Mathurā, the distressed Vrajavāsīs became overwhelmed in separation from Them. Their eyes remained fixed on the road as they saw the dust kicked up by the leaving chariot, and they maintained that same gaze even after the dust had settled back down again. In the memory of this pastime, Vajranābha named this village Magherā. This name comes from *mag herā*, which means "gazing in the direction of the road".

Śakaroyā

Indra, the king of the demigods, had committed an offence at the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Vrajavāsīs, and was therefore an offender. He worshipped Śrī Kṛṣṇa at this place to seek for forgiveness. One name of Indra is Śakra, from which the name Śakaroyā is derived. Indra's place of worship thus became known as Śakaroyā.

Barāhara

At the time of cow herding, Śrī Kṛṣṇa played here with the *sakhās* and assumed the form of Varāha. This village lies one mile south-west of Hājarā-gaon, and its present name is Barārā. *Bhakti-ratnākara* states:

*eī barāhara grāme varāharūpe te
khelāilā kṛṣṇapriyā sakhāra sahite*

“Here in Barāhara, Kṛṣṇa assumed the form of Varāha and played with His dear *sakhās*.”

Hārāsali

Hārāsali a place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līlā*. Nearby is Surukhurū-gaon. One-and-a-half miles north-east of Sei are the two villages of Māi and Basāi. Basāi lies north-east of Māi.

Endnotes

- 1 *sakhyāḥ kṣīrasamudbhūta ratnākara-sarovare
nānā prakāra-ratnānām udbhave varade namaḥ*
Nārada Pañcarātra
- 2 *añjapure samākhyāte subhānurgopaḥ saṁsthitaḥ
devadānīti vikhyātā gopinī nimīśasutā
tayoh sutā samutṭpannā viśākhā nāma viśrutā*
Kūrma Purāṇa
- 3 The modern enactment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes that takes place at Sāṅkari-khor in Varsanā. This was inaugurated by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. Actually, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are never *būḍhī*, old, but are ever fresh.
- 4 *yasya śrīmac-caraṇa-kamale komale komalāpi
śrī-rādhocair nija-sukha-kṛte sannayanī kucāgre
bhītā py āradatha na hi dadhātay asya kārkaśaya-doṣāta
sa śrī-goṣṭhe prathayatu sadā śeṣaśāyī sthitim naḥ*
- 5 *dvau māsau tatra cāvātsin madhum mādhavam eva ca
rāmaḥ kṣapāsu bhagavān gopinām ratim āvahan*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.65.17)
- 6 *tataśca paśyātra vasantaveṣau
śrī-rāma-kṛṣṇau vraja-sundarībhiḥ
vikrīdatuḥ sva sva yūtheśvarībhiḥ
samaṁ rasajñau kala dhauta maṇḍitau
ṛṭyanatau gopībhiḥ sārḍha gāyantau rasabhāvitau
gāyantībhiśca rāmābhir ṛṭyantībhiśca śobhitau*
Śrī Murāri Gupta's Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya-carita
- 7 A type of tall rush or grass (of the fibers of which ropes are made). Elephant grass.




- 8 *kātyāyani mahā-māye mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-goṣa-sutaṁ devi patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ
evaṁ māsaṁ vrataṁ ceruḥ kumāryaḥ kṛṣṇa-cetasah
bhadra-kālīm samanarcu bhūyān nanda-sutaḥ patiḥ*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.22.4–5)

- 9 He has full strength, fame, wealth, knowledge, beauty and renunciation.

- 10 *naumiḍya te 'bhra-vapuṣe taḍid-ambarāya
guñjāvataṁsa-ṣaripiccha-lasan-mukhāya
vanya-sraje kavala-vetra-viṣāṇa-veṇu-
lakṣma-śriye mṛdu-pade paśuṣpāṅgajāya*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.1)

O Lord, You are fit to receive the worship of the entire universe. O son of the king of cowherds, Your transcendental body is dark blue like a new cloud, Your garment is brilliant like lightning, and the beauty of Your face is enhanced by Your *guñja* earrings and the peacock feather on Your head. Wearing garlands of various forest flowers and leaves, and equipped with a herding stick, a buffalo horn, a flute, and a morsel of grain mixed with yoghurt in Your hand, You are most attractive. Your lotus feet are very soft. I offer my prayers unto You.

- 11 *tato 'tiḥṣṭāḥ sva-kṛto 'kṛtārhaṇam
puṣpaiḥ sugā apsarasaś ca nartanaih
gītaiḥ surā vādyā-dharāś ca vādyakaih
stavaiś ca viprā jaya niḥsvanair gaṇāḥ*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.12.34)



*bhadrāya bhadrārūpāya sadā kalyāṇa-varddhane
amaṅgalacchīde tasmai namo bhadrāvanāya ca*

Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (Uttara-khaṇḍa)

*“O Bhadravana, personification
of auspiciousness. You perpetually
bestow auspiciousness upon all and
destroy inauspiciousness. I repeatedly
offer my respects unto you.”*





Bhadravāṇa &
Bhāṇḍīravāṇa







BHADRAVĀṆA



his pastime place, situated two miles south-east of Nanda-ghāṭa and across the Yamunā, is one of the places where Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma go to graze the cows. The forest of Bhadravana is named after Śrī Balabhadra (Balarāma). Places of *darśana* here are Bhadra-sarovara and Gocāraṇa-sthala.

Bhadra-sarovara

*yajña-snāna svarūpāya rājyākhaṇḍa-prade
tīrtharāja namas-tubhyaṁ bhadrākhyā sarase namaḥ
Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (Uttara-khaṇḍa)*

“O Bhadra-sarovara, O Tīrtharāja, my greetings to you. You are the personification of sacrifices (*yajñas*), and you bestow that post that is never destroyed (*akhaṇḍa rājyapada*).”

That person who bathes in this *sarovara* obtains unlimited wealth and enjoyment, and is finally successful in attaining *prema-bhakti* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Baladeva.

Bhāṇḍīravāṇa



hāṇḍīravana, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed a variety of sweet pastimes, is prominent among the twelve forests. In this forest there are many pastime places to visit, such as Bhāṇḍīravāṇa, Veṇu-kūpa, Rāsa-sthalī Vamśivaṇa, the place of wrestling, the temple of Śrīdāma, Śyāma-talaiyā, Chāherī-gaon and Āgiyārā-gaon. That place where all kinds of *tattva-jñāna* fully manifest and where pastimes that are filled with opulence (*aiśvarya*) and sweetness (*madhurya*) manifest is called Bhāṇḍīravana. Some of these pastime places are described here.

Bhāṇḍīravāṇa

This *vaṭa* (banyan) tree is famous in Bhāṇḍīravana as the site of many different pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yuga. At the time of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes (*prakāṣa-lilā*), a huge banyan tree stood here full of long branches that spread in all directions. Nearby, Śrī Yamunā made a sweet sound as she followed her meandering course. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva and the *sakhās* would cross the river by walking on the branches of this tree. Male and female parrots, peacocks, peahens, cuckoos and *paṇihās* were always sitting singing on the tree's profuse branches. They remained satisfied by eating its fruit. Deer, does and other forest animals drank the sweet water of the Yamunā and took rest in the cool, pleasant shade of the banyan tree.



Parīkramā around 'Bhāṇḍīravāṇa

It was mostly to this Bhāṇḍīravāṇa that Mother Yaśodā and the mothers of the other cowherd boys used to send lunch with some *gopas* for their respective sons. While grazing the cows, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva and the *sakhās* used to have the cows drink the water in the Yamunā and then freely graze on the lush, green grass of the forest. The boys themselves bathed and engaged in water sports in the Yamunā's cool water. They would then sit in the shade under

this banyan tree and eat the various tasty preparations sent by their mothers. Śrī Kṛṣṇa sat in the midst of them all, and the *sakhās* would sit around Him in thousands of rows that extended here and there. Each and every *sakhā*, even if sitting at the back or far away, experienced that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was sitting right in front of him. Their eating was accompanied by laughing and joking, and they would play various games together. Brahmā and other demigods in the sky became astonished to see their festive and joyful picnics.

Brahmā performed the *gāndharva*¹ marriage of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala beneath this banyan tree. According to the *Garga-saṁhitā* and *Gīta-govinda*, Nanda Bābā once took Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Bhāṅḍīravana to graze the cows. This forest was very attractively covered with the dense foliage of the *tamāla* and *kadamba* trees and the lush creepers, and therefore it was only lit by scant sunrays. Suddenly, black clouds gathered from all directions and a raging rainstorm developed. Darkness pervaded. Nanda Bābā became frightened of the bad omen and carefully hid Kanhaiyā on his lap.

At that moment, the extraordinarily beautiful daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, Śrī Rādhikā, appeared there in the form of a young girl. She held Her hands out to Nanda Bābā, indicating that She wanted to take Kṛṣṇa with Her. The astonished Nanda Bābā gave Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Her. Rādhikā then took Kṛṣṇa to the inner part of Bhāṅḍīravana under the shelter of Bhāṅḍīravaṭa. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifested Himself as *manmatha-manmatha kiśora*, a beautiful youth who bewilders even the mind of Cupid. Meanwhile, Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs* also appeared here with Caturmukha Brahmā. Knowing the desire of Kiśora-Kiśorī, Brahmā performed Their *gāndharva* wedding by reciting Vedic *mantras*. Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa exchanged beautiful flower garlands. The delighted *sakhīs* sang wedding songs as the demigods showered flowers from the sky. While everyone looked on, Brahmā left that place. The *sakhīs* also disappeared, and Kṛṣṇa again assumed the form of a small boy. Śrīmatī Rādhikā took Kṛṣṇa



In remembrance of the gāndharva marriage

by hand and returned to Nanda Bābā, who was standing waiting for Him. Meanwhile, the clouds dispersed and the storm abated. Nanda Bābā now returned with Kṛṣṇa to his Nanda-Vraja.

The following incident also took place here in Bhāṇḍīravana. One summer's day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* brought the cows to drink water at the Yamunā and then let them graze freely. The boys became so absorbed in their delightful picnic that they were unaware that their cows had wandered off. The cows made their way to the completely parched Muñjavana, through which even elephants could not force their way. It was the month of Jetha (May–June), and the blazing sun scorched the sand. The cows could not find shade anywhere, and had forgotten the pathway out of this wild *muñja* forest. Dying of thirst, they began to cry out in distress. The *sakhās* went to look for the cows without telling Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva where they were going. Finally, they too arrived at

the *muñja* forest in the same dire condition as that of the cows. Meanwhile, the servants of the wicked Kaṁsa set Muñjavana on fire, and within a moment the wind had spread it everywhere. The fire's blazing flames surrounded the cows and cowherd boys, who saw no other means of rescue than to call out to Kṛṣṇa. They did so, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa arrived immediately. Telling the *sakhās* to close their eyes, He swallowed the forest-fire within a second. Upon opening their eyes, the *sakhās* saw that they were again under the cooling shade of Bhāṇḍīravaṭa, immersed in festive eating pastimes with Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, the cows grazing peacefully nearby. The distress of the forest-fire seemed like a dream.

The place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa swallowed the forest fire is called Muñjāṭavī or Īṣikāṭavī, and in its middle is Agiyārā. We have already described this earlier. The place where Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* had festive picnics, and where, after Kṛṣṇa swallowed the forest-fire, the *sakhās* again began to joke and laugh while eating and the cows happily chewed grass is called Bhāṇḍīravaṭa. These pastimes are described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.19.12):

*tatheti militākṣeṣu bhagavān agnim ulbaṇam
pītvā mukhena tāna kṛcchrād yogādhīso vyamocayat*

“‘Okay,’ the boys said, and closed their eyes. Then Bhagavān, the controller of all mystic power, swallowed the terrible fire, thus saving the *sakhās* from the danger.”

Veṇu-kūpa

After killing Vatsāsura, Śrī Kṛṣṇa met the *gopīs* near Bhāṇḍīravaṭa and boasted His strength. The *gopīs* accused Kṛṣṇa of killing a cow and forbade Him to touch them. Kṛṣṇa said, “I did not kill a cow but a demon in the form of a calf.” The *gopīs*, however, did not accept this. Kṛṣṇa then inquired how His purity could be restored, and the *gopīs* answered, “If You bathe in all the sacred rivers and ponds on the earth, You will again become pure and can touch us.” After hearing the words of the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa



Veṇu-kūpa

created a beautiful well (*kūpa*) with His flute (*veṇu*) and summoned all of the earth's sacred places to enter it. He bathed in that well and then met with the *gopīs*.

This well, known as *Veṇu-kūpa*, is situated near *Bhāṇḍīravaṭa*. By bathing in it, one obtains the same result as by taking bath at each and every sacred place. Even today, the women of *Vraja* worship this well on certain occasions. Those who do not have a child or whose child has died untimely make a vow to propitiate the deity here by their worship. Their hearts' desires are then fulfilled.

The temple of Śrī Baladeva

Śrī Balabhadra, His younger brother *Kanhaiyā* and the *sakhās* used to come to *Bhāṇḍīravāna* to pasture the cows. Śrī Balabhadra presides over the forests on the east side of the *Yamunā*, like

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Bhadravana, Bhāṇḍiravana, Baelvana, Gokula-Mahāvana and Lohavana. Therefore, all these places have temples of Śrī Baladeva. It is recommended that one visit the temple of Baladeva in Bhāṇḍiravana.

Chāherī-gaon

The village located between Bhāṇḍiravaṭa and Vamśivaṭa is called Chāherī-gaon. After playing with the *sakhās* in Bhāṇḍiravana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His friends used to come here, sit in the shade underneath the trees, and enjoy their meals with much joy and laughter. The name Chāherī is derived from the word *chāyā*, which means “shade” or “shadow”. This village is also called Bijaulī.

Rāsa-sthalī Vamśivaṭa

Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s place of *rāsa* at Vamśivaṭa is situated a short distance from Bhāṇḍiravaṭa. This Vamśivaṭa is a different place from the Vamśivaṭa in Vṛndāvana. At the time of cow herding, Śrī Kṛṣṇa would climb this banyan tree and play His flute to call the cows. In this way, He would gather them and bring them all back home. Sometimes, on a beautiful, pleasant night, He would also call His beloved *gopīs* from here – “Rādhikā, Lalitā, Viśākhā!” Upon their arrival, *rāsa-līlā* would unfold under this Vamśivaṭa.

The temple of Śrīdāma

Beneath this Vamśivaṭa is the temple of Śrīdāma Bhaiyā. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to Mathurā, Śrīdāma Sakhā was heart-broken. He went to this solitary Vamśivaṭa, where he remembered Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s sweet pastimes, filling his heart with sorrow. Many days later, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa returned to Gokula after killing Dantavakra, He again met with Śrīdāma here and took Śrīdāma with Him. One can have *darśana* of Śrīdāma in the temple here.

Śyāma-talaiyā

This pond (*talaiyā*) is situated near Varṁśivaṭa. When the *gopīs* became thirsty during *rāsa*, Śrī Śyāmasundara made this pond with His flute and satisfied all the *gopīs* with its luscious water. Nowadays, this pond lies in a completely dilapidated condition with very little water, but still, people take *ācamana* here with faith.



Bhāṇḍīravāṇa

Endnote

- ¹ In India, the parents generally select the husband or wife for their daughter or son. The *gāndharva* marriage, however, takes place by personal selection. In a *gāndharva* wedding, there is no lengthy ceremony. The bride and groom need only exchange garlands and simple marriage vows.



“Māṭavana is one of the main forests of Vraja-maṇḍala. It is a wide and spacious area on the bank of the Yamunā.

Kṛṣṇa and Balabhadra would bring the cows to graze in this enchanting forest full of lush trees and creepers, green grass and untold varieties of fruits and flowers.”





मāṭavāṇa







āṭavana is one of the main forests of Vraja-
maṇḍala. It is a wide and spacious area on the
bank of the Yamunā. Kṛṣṇa and Balabhadra
would bring the cows to graze in this enchanting
forest full of lush trees and creepers, green
grass and untold varieties of fruits and flowers.
The many pastimes places here include Māṭa
or Māṅṭa-gaon, Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa, Ḍāṅgolī-gaon,
Māna-sarovara, and Pānī-gaon.

Māṭa-gaon

The word *māṭa* refers to a large earthen pot meant for churning
yoghurt and other household chores. During Kṛṣṇa's pastimes,
these pots were made here and used by the Vrajavāsīs in their daily
household work; hence the village is known as Māṭa. It lies two
miles south of Bhāṅḍīravaṭa and five miles north of Vṛndāvana
on the other side of the Yamunā. The land in Māṭavana is for

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cow grazing, and there is a famous temple of Baladeva here. In *Bhakti-ratnākara*, Māṭha-gaon is described as follows:

*eī ‘māṭhagrāma’ – mahā ānanda ekhāne
nānā krīḍā kare rāmakṣṇa sakhāsane
mṛttika-nirmita bṛhat pātra – māṭha nāma
māṭhotpatti-ṣrasasta-e hetu māṭha grāma
dadhimanthanādi lāgi vrajavāsigaṇa
layena asaṅkhya māṭha – aise sabe kana*

“In Māṭha-grāma, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa played with their *sakhās*. This place is so named after the huge earthen vessel called a *māṭha*, which the Vrajavāsīs would use to churn their buttermilk from yoghurt.”

Pānī-gaon

This village is situated on the bank of the Yamunā two miles south of Māna-sarovara and a quarter of a mile south-east of Vṛndāvana. It is also known as Pānī-ghāṭa.

At the time of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, Maharṣi Durvāsā stayed at his hermitage (*āśrama*) near Pānī-gaon. Once, the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana wanted to please Maharṣi Durvāsā with a large selection of very delicious food preparations, which they were going to carry from Vṛndāvana across the Yamunā to his *āśrama*. Yamunā was in flood due to the monsoon season, and her waves were so high that no boatman was courageous enough to ferry the *gopīs* across the river. Suddenly, Kṛṣṇa appeared and smiling, asked them why they were in anxiety. The *gopīs* told Him about their dilemma. Kṛṣṇa said, “You can easily cross the river. Go to the bank of the Yamunā and tell to her in unison, ‘If Kṛṣṇa has not seen the face of any woman, then, on the strength of His firm vow of celibacy, may we easily cross the river on foot.’” The *gopīs* did as Kṛṣṇa had told them and crossed the river on foot, arriving at Maharṣi Durvāsā’s *āśrama* with all their foodstuffs. There, the hundreds and thousands of *gopīs* pleased Durvāsā with a vast spread of

delicious foods. Being satisfied, he blessed them that their hearts' desires would be fulfilled.

When they were ready to return, they told Maharṣi Durvāsā the difficulty they faced in crossing the river. He said, "Tell Yamunā, 'If Durvāsā has not eaten any cooked food during his whole life, then, on the strength of his austerities, may we cross over to Vṛndāvana on foot.'" They did so and reached Vṛndāvana by walking upon the Yamunā's waters.

The *gopīs* were greatly astonished that they had been able to cross the Yamunā on foot on the strength of Kṛṣṇa and Maharṣi Durvāsā's declarations. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had been in the company of women since birth and Maharṣi Durvāsā had devoured everything they had just brought him. They enquired from Śrī Kṛṣṇa about this mystery. Very seriously, He replied, "Although I stay with all of you day and night, My vow of celibacy nonetheless remains intact, because I do not think Myself as the enjoyer. Durvāsā is also free from this identification; therefore, although he has eaten everything, he has eaten nothing. A person who thinks himself to be the enjoyer is strongly attached to this material existence." The *gopīs* looked at Kṛṣṇa in great astonishment. That place where the *gopīs* crossed the Yamunā is called Pānī-gaon or Pānī-ghāṭa.

Kṛṣṇa-kunḍa

This pond is situated in Gāṅgralī-gaon, which lies between Māṭa and Baelvana. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *sakhās* and the cows would drink water here and delight in playful games in the water.

Māna-sarovara

At the time of the autumnal (*śaradīya*) *rāsa*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā saw Her beloved Kṛṣṇa dancing on the bank of the Yamunā with the other *gopīs*. This threw Her into a sulky mood (*māna*) that was very difficult to subdue. She left the place of *rāsa* on Her own, crossed the Yamunā, and came to this solitary forest. Distressed in separation from Kṛṣṇa, She began to cry, and the stream of



Māna-sarovara

tears that flowed from Her eyes created this lake, or *sarovara*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the topmost relisher of transcendental mellows, searched for Śrīmatījī and found Her here. Placing His flute and His head at Her lotus feet, Śrī Kṛṣṇa admitted His fault and assured Her that He would never act like that again.

This charming place in Vraja is embellished by the dense shade of the *pilū*, *kadamba* and *tamāla* trees and by the peacocks, cuckoos, swans, deer and other birds and animals. It remains visible to our eyes to this present day so as to remind us of the pastimes of the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

In the old temple on the bank of Māna-sarovara, a painting is worshipped of Śrī Kṛṣṇa offering His flute and His head at the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhikā in an effort to break Her *māna*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is looking at Her as if to say, “*smara-garala-khaṇḍanam mama śirasi maṇḍanam dehi pada-pallavam udāram* – the beautiful flower



Kuñja in Māna-sarovara



Māna-sarovara temple

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The painting in the temple of Māna-sarovara



Hari-kathā outside the temple of Māna-sarovara

blossoms of Your feet counteract the deadly poison of amorous love, and they extinguish the fearsome fire of the pain of that love, which rages within My heart. Therefore, please be kind and decorate My head with Your flower-like feet.”¹

Endnotes

- ¹ From Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmi’s *Gīta-govinda* (Song 19, verse 8).



*tapah siddhi pradāyaiva namo bilvavanāya ca
janārdana namastubhyam bilveśāya namostu te*

Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (Uttara-khaṇḍa)

*“O Bilvavana, bestower of the
perfection of austerities. I bow
down to you. O Janārdana, O
master of Bilvavana, obeisances
unto You.”*





Baelvāṇa &
Lohavāṇa







Baelvāṇa



his forest is called Baelvana because, during Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes, there was an abundance of *bael* (*bilva*) trees here. While grazing the cows in this most captivating and pleasant forest, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* would play different kinds of sports and relish the ripe *bael* fruits. This is described in *Bhakti-ratnākara*:

*rāmakṛṣṇa sakhā saha e bilvavanete
pakka bilvaphala bhuñje mahākautukete*

“It was here that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa along with their *sakhās* ate ripe *bilva* fruits with great festivity.”

Once, Śrī Lakṣmī heard a description from the mouth of Nārada about Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweet *rāsa-līlā* and the good fortune of the *gopīs*. An eagerness to behold this *rāsa-līlā* arose in her heart. No one but the *gopīs* has the qualification



Śrī Lakṣmī

to enter *rāsa-līlā*, since they are the true emblem of undivided and pure *prema*. It is only possible to gain entrance into *rāsa-līlā* by receiving the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the embodiment of *mahābhāva* and the crest jewel of all Kṛṣṇa's beloveds, and by the mercy of Her true representatives, the *gopīs*. At that time, one can gain entrance very easily. Thus, to enter the *rāsa-līlā* Lakṣmī began performing severe austerities at this place, but to no avail. To this day, she is performing austerities here with this desire. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*¹ the wives of the serpent Kālīya refer to this pastime in their prayers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa: "Bhagavān, we are unable to understand what *sādhana* Kālīyanāga performed that He became a proprietor of the dust of Your lotus feet. It is so rare to procure this dust that even Your wife Śrī Lakṣmī was unable to obtain it, even after giving up all sense-pleasures and performing austerities for a very long time in conformity with the prescribed rules and regulations."

Just nearby are Kṛṣṇa-kunḍa and a sitting-place (*baiṭhaka*) of Śrī Vallabhācārya. There is also a temple of Śrī Lakṣmī here.

Lohavāṇa



his place lies just across the Yamunā from Mathurā, approximately two miles north-east of the Mathurā–Gokula highway. *Bhakti-ratnākara* describes Lohavana as follows:

*lohavane kṛṣṇera adbhuta-gocāraṇa
nānāpuṣpa sugandhe vyāpita ramyasthāna
ethā lohajaṅghāsura badhe bhagavān
lohajaṅghavana nāma hayata ihāra*

“The forest of Lohavana is decorated with all varieties of trees and flowers and is one of the places where Kṛṣṇa pastures His cows. It is called Lohavana because, while grazing the cows here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed Lohajaṅghāsura.”



Lohavana



Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa

At a Yamunā ghāṭa, Kṛṣṇa enjoyed boating-pastimes in the company of the gopīs. These pastimes has been beautifully described in *Bhakti-ratnākara*:

*yamunā-nikaṭe yāi śrīnivāse kaya
eī ghāṭe kṛṣṇa naukā-kṛīḍā ārambhayā
se ati kautuka rāi sakhīra sahite
dugdhādi laīyā āisena pāra haite*

*dekhi, se apūrva śobhā kṛṣṇa mugdha haīyā
eka bhite rahilena jīrṇa naukā laīyā
śrī-rādhikā sakhīsaha kahe bāre-bāre
pāra kara nāvika-yāiba śīghra pāre*

“Lohavana is a charming and delightful place adorned with attractive flowers of all kinds. Nearby, in the virtuous Yamunā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs boating-pastimes with the *gopīs*. Disguised as a boatman, He seats the beautiful young cowherd girls in His boat and takes them out into the middle of the Yamunā’s flowing waters. Then He says, ‘My old dilapidated boat is leaking, and water is rushing in. Throw all your pots of milk and yoghurt overboard; otherwise, it will surely sink.’ The *gopīs* beg and beseech this boatman to quickly take them to the other side of the river.”

This pastime place still lies here today, and concealed within it is Kṛṣṇa’s boating-pastime with the *gopīs*. One can also have *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa, Lohāsura’s cave and Śrī Gopīnātha here.

Durvāsā Āśrama

This place lies across the Yamunā one mile north of Viśrāma-ghāṭa in Mathurā. It is Mahārṣi Durvāsā’s place of austerities. It was from here that Durvāsā crossed the Yamunā on Dvādaśī and went to the palace of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja in Mathurā just when the king was due to break his Ekādaśī fast. This pastime has been narrated in detail in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (Ninth Canto, Fourth Chapter). Just near the hermitage of Durvāsā was the *āśrama* of Mahārṣi Parāśara. Śrī Vyāsa and other sages and saints would visit Mahārṣi Parāśara there. Close by, on the bank of Yamunā, was the *āśrama* of Dattātreya. The mother of Śrī Vyāsadeva, Satyavatī (also known as Matsyagandhā), stayed here with her father, the boatman who had raised her. The island on which Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Śrī Vedavyāsa took birth is nearby in the Yamunā. At Durvāsā Āśrama, the *gopīs* satisfied Mahārṣi Durvāsā by offering him various kinds of delicious foodstuffs.

Today a large and magnificent temple has been built here that is unique in Vraja.² This temple has deities of Mahārṣi Durvāsā, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Yamunā-devī.

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The deities at Durvāsā Āśrama



Durvāsā Āśrama

Āyore-grāma

This village lies near Lohavana. During the Muslim rule, this village was named Ālīpura, and is still known by this name today. When Kṛṣṇa had killed Dantavakra, He crossed the Yamunā and started for Gokula, to meet with the Vrajavāsīs – His mother, father, *sakhās*, *gopas* and *gopīs*. They met Him at this place, crying out with great love, “Āyore, āyore, kanhaiyā! – He is coming, Kanhaiyā is coming!” Nanda Bābā’s and Yaśodā’s meeting with Kṛṣṇa brimmed with intense affection. This village therefore became known as Āyore. *Bhakti-ratnākara* describes this poignant scene:

*kṛṣṇa dekhi dhāya gopa ānande vihvala
‘āyore āyore’ bali kare kolāhala
miliyā sabāre kṛṣṇa, kṛṣṇa sabe laiyā
nijālaye āilā yamunāpāra haīyā*

*hailā paramānanda braje ghare-ghare
pūrvamata sabā-saha śrikṛṣṇa vihare
‘āyore’ baliyā gopa yekhāne milila
āyore nāmete grāma thatāya hailā*

Gorāi (Gaurava, or Gorvāi-gaon, or Gorvāi)

The village of Gorāi lies near Āyore-grāma, three miles north-east of Gokula. Today, this village is known as Guru. Nanda Mahārāja resided here for some days along with the other *gopas* and *gopīs* after they had returned from Kurukṣetra. *Bhakti-ratnākara* states that at the time of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes there was a well-known village named Ḍhānā in this very area, where an exceptionally wealthy landlord lived. He had a close, affectionate relationship with Nanda Mahārāja. When Nanda Bābā and the *gopas* and *gopīs* were journeying to Gokula, they arrived at this village. That landlord happily welcomed them with great honour and joy and accommodated them in his village for several days, serving them with much respect. This place has therefore become famous as

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Gaurava or Gorvāi, which is derived from the word *gaurava denā*, meaning “to give honour”.

Bandī-Ānandī

A short distance to the south of Lohavana is the village of Bandī-Ānandī. Bandī and Ānandī were two heavenly damsels (*devīs*) who would use the excuse of making cow-dung patties here at Śrī Nanda Bābā's place to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *darśana*. The *kuṇḍas* of Bandī and Ānandī are still present today in memory of these two *devīs*.



Bandī and Ānandī

Dāūjī: the place of Baladeva

The village of Dāūjī is situated ten miles south of Rāyā and fifteen miles from Mathurā. This village is originally called Rīḍhā, but is now known as Dāūjī. In the temple here, there is an extremely attractive *śyāma*-complexioned deity of Dāūjī. Revatī-devī is also present here, but is hidden to the side of Dāūjī behind the door.

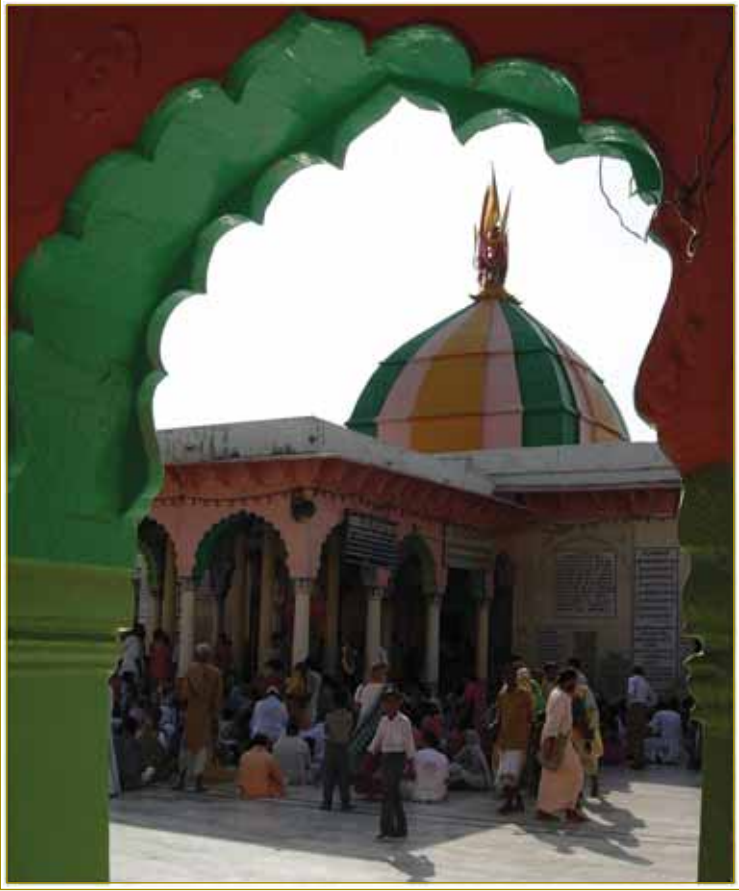
The confidential reason why she is somewhat concealed is that Śrī Dāūjī's marriage took place while He was residing in Dvārakā and not while He was living in Vraja.

Vajranābha established the deity of Śrī Dāūjī. Even though all the famous deities of Vraja left Vraja when the Yavanas (Muslims) invaded, Dāūjī tricked them and remained here. It is said that this deity was found lying upside down in Kṡirsāgara (Saṅkarṡaṇa-kunḁa) which is situated on the western side of this temple. Devoted persons took Śrī Dāūjī from the *kunḁa* and built this temple, in which they duly seated and worshipped Him. The priests may have put the deity in the *kunḁa* in fear of attack by the bigot Aurangzeb.

Dāūjī's birth from the womb of Mother Rohiṇī, eight days before the birth of Śrī Kṡṡṇa, took place in Gokula-Mahāvana. His name-giving ceremony, the ceremony held for the first shaving of



The deity of Dāūjī



Dāūjī Temple

His head and other purificatory rites (*saṁskāras*) were performed with those of baby Kṛṣṇa. Dāūjī and Kṛṣṇa would also play and crawl around together.

Rīḍhā or Dāūjī-gaon was the pasturing ground for Śrī Baladeva's cows, being a forest area at the time of His manifest pastimes. This place is within Vidrumavana.



Dāūjī and Revatī-devī

Endnote

- ¹ *kasyānubhāvo 'sya na deva vidmahe
tavāṅghri-reṇu-sparśādihikāraḥ
yad-vāñchaya śrīr lalanācarat tapo
vihāya kāmān su-ciraṃ dhṛta-vratā*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.16.36)

- ² [Editors' endnote] This temple has been built by this book's author, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmi Mahārāja. He is an intimate disciple of *om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmi Mahārāja, the founder of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, and he is completely dedicated to fulfilling his holy master's innermost desire.







*“The Yamunā flows close by
Bṛhadvana, or Mahāvana.
This forest is beautifully
decorated with different
kinds of trees, creepers
and flowers, and there are
lush, green meadows
for the cows to graze in.
Beholding this beauty,
the Vrajavāsī gopas became
very pleased and happily
began to reside here.”*







Mahāvāṇa-Gokula



ahāvana is situated about six miles east of Mathurā. It is also called Bṛhadvana, because it is the largest (*bṛhad*) of all the forests (*vanas*). In fact this forest has three names: Mahāvana, Gokula and Bṛhadvana. This Gokula is non-different from Goloka.¹

Parjanya Gopa, the father of Goparāja Nanda Bābā, initially resided at Nandagaon where he had five sons – namely Upānanda, Abhinanda, Nanda, Sunanda and Nandana – and two daughters named Sanandā and Nandinī. Also, while staying in Nandagaon he gave all his sons and daughters in marriage. His middle son, Nanda, had no offspring, which caused Parjanya Gopa great concern. He worshipped Nārāyaṇa in the hope that Nanda would father a child. By a voice in the sky, he came to know that a very brave son would soon be born to Śrī Nanda. This son would possess all good qualities and annihilate every demon.

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Some time after this aerial prophecy, Keśī and other demons began to cause a disturbance in Nandagaon. Parjanya Gopa together with his family and all of his relatives moved here to Bṛhadvana. The Yamunā flows close by Bṛhadvana, or Mahāvana. This forest is beautifully decorated with different kinds of trees, creepers and flowers, and there are lush, green meadows for the cows to graze in. Beholding this beauty, the Vrajavāsi *gopas* became very pleased and happily began to reside here.

Yaśodā-maiyā gave birth to the twins Kṛṣṇa Kanhaiyā and Yogamāyā at midnight, in the delivery room at Nanda-bhavana in Mahāvana. The umbilical cord was cut and other Vedic purificatory rituals were performed here.

Kṛṣṇa killed the demons Pūtanā, Tṛṇāvarta and Śakaṭāsura here, thus liberating them. Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva's name-giving ceremony also took place at Mahāvana, in the nearby cowshed (*gośālā*) of Nanda Mahārāja. It was here that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa started to crawl on Their knees, that Mother Yaśodā tied the naughty baby Kṛṣṇa to a mortar, and that Kṛṣṇa delivered the



Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva with Their mothers, Yaśodā and Robinī

Yamala-arjuna trees. The childhood pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma up to the age of two-and-a-half to three years took place here in Mahāvana. These pastimes are briefly described further on.

The Pastime Places of Mahāvāṇa

The pastime places of Bṛhadvana, or Mahāvana, are mentioned in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* as follows: “In Mahāvana, there are twenty-one sacred places (*tīrthas*), which are saturated with good qualities. They include Yamala-arjuna-uddhāra-sthala, Nanda-kūpa, Cintāharaṇa-ghāṭa, Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa, Sārasvata-kuṇḍa, Sarasvatī-śilā, Viṣṇu-kuṇḍa, Karṇa-kūpa, Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa, Gopa-kūpa, Ramaṇa-reti, Tṛṇāvarta-badha-sthala, Pūtanā-badha-sthala, Nanda’s palace, Nanda-bhavana, Ramaṇa-ghāṭa and Mathurā Kṣetra (the birthplace of Mathurānātha, Śeṣa (Balarāma) and Yogamāyā). Visiting Mathurā Kṣetra dispels all one’s sins and brings about all auspiciousness.”²

Both *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Bhakti-ratnākara* mention the following pastime places: the place where the Yamala-arjuna trees were delivered (Yamalārjuna-uddhāra-sthala), the place where Pūtanā was killed (Pūtanā-badha-sthala), the place where the cart was broken (Śakaṭa-bhañjana-sthāna), Sapta-sānudrika-kūpa and Gopīśvara Mahādeva. Additionally, *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa* mentions Śrī Nanda Temple, Yaśodā’s resting-place (Yaśodā-śayana-sthala), the place of the grinding mortar (Okhala-sthala), the birthplace of Yogamāyā (Yogamāyā-janma-sthala), Bāla Gokuleśvara and Rohiṇī Temple. *Bhakti-ratnākara* further mentions Kṛṣṇa’s birthplace (Janma-sthāna), the place where the sanctifying ceremonies took place at the time of Kṛṣṇa’s birth (Janma-saṁskāra-sthāna), the cowshed (*gośālā*), the place of the name-giving ceremony (Nāma-karaṇa-sthāna), Agni-saṁskāra-sthala, Stanya-pāna-sthala, the place where Tṛṇāvarta was killed (Tṛṇāvarta-badha-sthala), the place where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma crawled on Their knees, Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa, Yaśodājī’s courtyard, the place where *navanīta*,

or the fresh butter, was stolen (Navanīta-corī-sthala), the place where the Dāmodara-līlā took place (Dāmodara-līlā-sthala), Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's place of *bhajana*, the place of Madana-mohanajī, Ramaṇa-retī, Gopa-kūpa, the residences of Upānanda and the other *gopas*, the place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's birth-ceremony and other ceremonies, Gopa-baiṭhaka, the path to go to Vṛndāvana (Vṛndāvana-gamana-patha), Sakraulī and so forth.

We will now describe those places of *darśana* that still remain visible today.

Danta-dhāvana-ṭilā

Nanda Mahārāja would sit on this small hill (*ṭilā*) and clean his teeth (*danta-dhāvana*) with a twig.

Nanda Bābā's residence

Around the base of Danta-dhāvana-ṭilā stood the residences of Nanda as well as those of his brothers and relatives. The ruins of these houses can still be seen today, even from a distance.

Nanda-bhavana (Kṛṣṇa's birthplace)

The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Yogamāyā took birth as twins from the womb of Mother Yaśodā in her room in Nanda's palace. They were born at midnight on Āṣṭamī (the eighth day after the full moon) in the month of Bhādra when the star (*nakṣatra*) known as Rohiṇī was visible in the sky.

One can take *darśana* of Yogamāyā here. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* vividly describes how the most fortunate Nanda Bābā became very joyful upon receiving a son. After the ceremony known as *nāḍicheda-saṁskāra* had been performed, in which the umbilical cord is cut, baby Kṛṣṇa was bathed and so on. Nanda Bābā then called the *brāhmaṇas* to perform the various purificatory rituals and other rites of childbirth.³

Śrī Raghupati Upādyaḥya says: "In a world frightened by birth and death, some people take shelter of the Śruti, some of the



Nanda-bhavana

Smṛtis and some of the *Mahābhārata*. But I pay my homage to Śrī Nandarāya, in whose courtyard Parabrahma is playing as a child.”⁴

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Hari-kathā in the courtyard of Nanda-bhavana



Nanda-bhavana



The deities at Nanda-bhavana

The place where Pūtanā was liberated
(Pūtanā-uddhāra-sthala)

Pūtanā disguised herself as a mother, smeared her breasts with deadly poison, and came to this place in Nanda-bhavana. Directly in front of Yaśodā and Rohiṇī, she was able to very easily pick up sleeping baby Kṛṣṇa from the cradle, put Him on her lap and begin to breast-feed Him. Kṛṣṇa sucked out the deadly poison together with her life, thus liberating her from the body of a *rākṣasī*. He then gave her the position of a *dhātṛī*, a nurse or foster-mother, in Goloka.

In a previous life, Pūtanā was Ratnamālā, the daughter of Bali Mahārāja. When, in the palace of her father, she beheld the beauty of Lord Vāmanadeva, she desired to have a son just like Him. But when Vāmanadeva took away everything from Bali Mahārāja and bound him with a rope of snakes (*nāgapāśa*), she began to cry. She thought, “I would kill such a cruel son by feeding him breast milk mixed with poison.” Knowing her desire, Lord Vāmanadeva gave her this boon, saying, “*Evam astu* – so be it.” Śrī Kṛṣṇa therefore killed her in that form and gave Pūtanā her proper identity as a nurse.



A wall-painting of Pūtanā in Nanda-bhavana

The place where the cart was broken

(Śakaṭa-bhañjana-sthāna)

Once, Kṛṣṇa was sleeping in a cradle under a cart while Mother Yaśodā busied herself with His birthday ceremony. Just then, an invisible demon who was sent by Kaṁsa entered that cart and began to press it down with the intention of crushing and killing Kṛṣṇa. The naughty baby Kṛṣṇa, however, made a joyous cry and, with a kick of His foot, easily killed that demon. The cart collapsed and the pots that were filled with milk, yoghurt, butter and other ingredients shattered to pieces. Hearing the baby’s cry, Mother Yaśodā rushed to the scene and became struck with wonder. When she saw that her Kṛṣṇa was safe, she called for the *brāhmaṇas* and donated many cows to them in charity. The *brāhmaṇas* bathed Kṛṣṇa using the urine and dung of a black cow and recited Vedic *mantras* for His protection. To this day, the memories of this pastime remain present at this place.

In his previous life, Śakaṭāsura was the son of the demon Hiranyākṣa. His name in that life was Utkaca and he was also a demon. Once, he trampled on and destroyed the lush, green trees and creepers in the sage Lomaśa’s hermitage. The sage, filled with anger, cursed him, saying, “Villain, may you become bodiless!” Hearing this, Utkaca fell at the lotus feet of the sage begging forgiveness. The sage said, “You will be liberated by the touch of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet during the reign of Vaivasvata Manu.” That same demon was concealed within the cart and tried to crush Kṛṣṇa, but by the touch of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, he became liberated. This pastime is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (Tenth Canto, Chapter Seven).

The place where Tṛṇāvarta was killed

(Tṛṇāvarta-badha-sthala)

Once, Kaṁsa sent a demon named Tṛṇāvarta to Gokula to kill Kṛṣṇa. Kaṁsa had advised Tṛṇāvarta to assume the form of a whirlwind and thus he entered Gokula. The demon seized Kṛṣṇa,

who was sitting beside Mother Yaśodā, and flew into the sky. Baby Kṛṣṇa caught his neck as any baby might, but His doing so choked the demon. Tṛṇāvarta's eyes popped out from their sockets, and he fell to the earth and died.⁵

The place where yoghurt was churned (Dadhi-manthana-sthala)

Yaśodā would churn yoghurt here. Once, during the last part of the night, baby Kṛṣṇa was sleeping on His bed. The previous day, Yaśodā-maiyā had sent all of her servants and maidservants to their respective homes for the occasion of Dīpāvalī. In the morning, she churned the yoghurt herself, so she would be able to feed fresh butter to Kṛṣṇa. As she was churning, she absorbed herself in singing about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in a high and melodious voice. Kṛṣṇa awoke and, feeling hungry, climbed out of His bed and began to search for His mother. Crying and stumbling along with great difficulty, He somehow managed to reach Mother Yaśodā, who affectionately placed Him on her lap and began to breast-feed Him.

When she was only midway through feeding Him, the milk on the fire nearby began to boil over. Mother Yaśodā forcefully put Kṛṣṇa on the floor and went to take care of the milk. Baby Kṛṣṇa had not yet drunk to His satisfaction and He began to quiver in uncontrollable anger. Taking up a stone pestle, He punched a hole in the churning pot and liquid yoghurt flowed all over the floor. Kṛṣṇa trampled through the stream of yoghurt before walking into the house and climbing upon an upside-down mortar. Taking butter from a hanging pot, He ate some Himself and then began to feed some to the monkeys and crows. Upon returning from the nearby stove, Yaśodā-maiyā saw signs of her child's activities and began to smile. She crept up behind Kṛṣṇa, but just as she went to catch Him He caught sight of her, jumped off the mortar and fled. But Mother Yaśodā ran faster than Kṛṣṇa and caught hold

of Him from behind. To punish Him, she tied Him to the mortar and then busied herself with her household duties.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.9.18) states:

*sva-mātuḥ svinna-gātrāyā
visrasta-kabara-srajaḥ
dṛṣṭvā pariśramam kṛṣṇaḥ
kṛpayā 'sīt sva-bandhane*

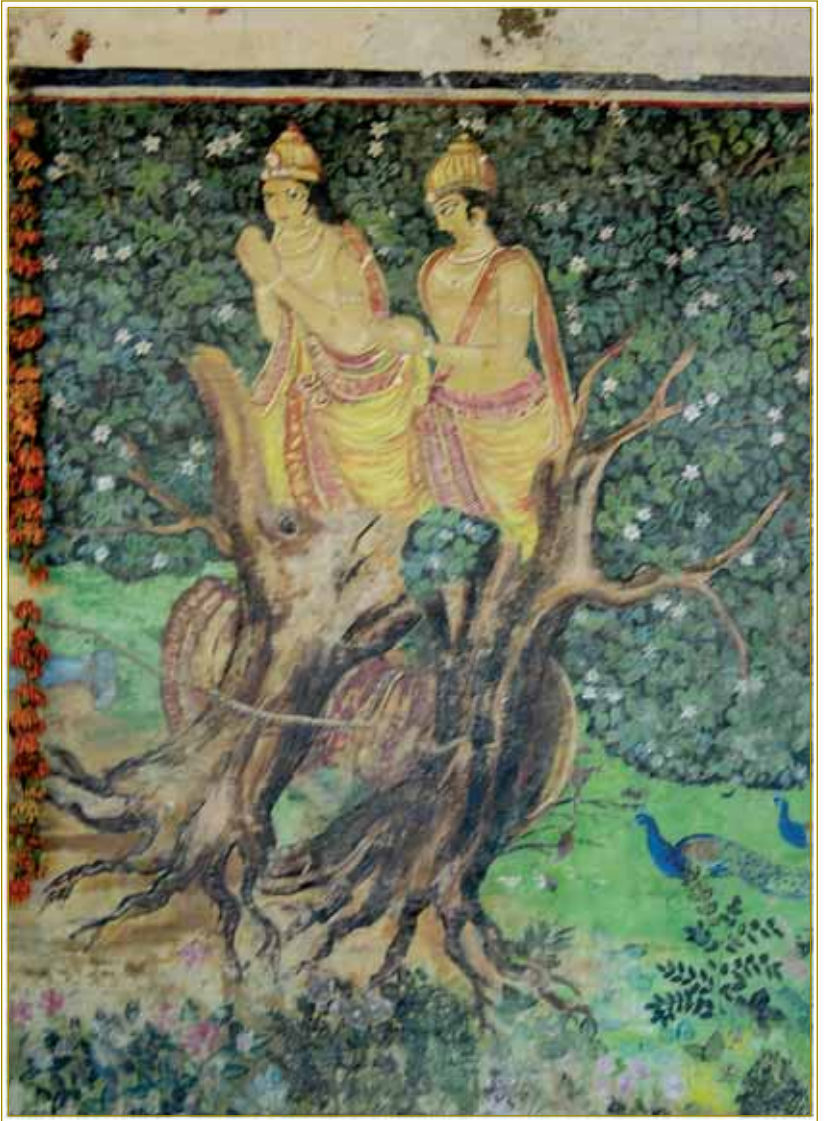
“When Kṛṣṇa saw the condition of His mother – her body covered with perspiration and the flowers falling from her hair due to her hard labour – He could understand that she was fatigued. Kṛṣṇa became merciful to her and agreed to be bound.”

Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* began to drag the grinding mortar, and by so doing, touched and delivered Kuvera’s sons, who had been cursed in a previous life to become trees. This pastime is described in detail in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Tenth Canto, Chapters Nine and Ten).

Mother Yaśodā had tied Kṛṣṇa to the mortar right here in Nanda-bhavana, and the place where Nalakuvera and Maṅigrīva were delivered lies just outside.



*The grinding
mortar*



*A wall-painting of the deliverance of
Nalakuvera and Maṅgīrīva*

Nanda Baba's cowshed, or gośālā

Gargācārya performed Kṛṣṇa's and Baladeva's name-giving ceremony in this solitary cowshed. During the ceremony, Gargācārya predicted that Śrī Balarāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa would possess astonishing prowess, annihilate demons, and perform other divine pastimes. Nanda Mahārāja performed the name-giving ceremony without any festivities because he feared Kāmsa's atrocities.

Malla-tīrtha

Here, the naked babies Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma wrestled with each other. The *gopīs* encouraged Them to wrestle by offering to give the winner a *laḍḍū*. At this, the two boys, each desiring to defeat the other, began to wrestle. Today, Gopīśvara Mahādeva is here.

Nanda-kūpa

This well is also known as Sapta-sānudrika-kūpa. Mahārāja Nanda used to draw water from it. It is said that the demigods created it for the service of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Its water stays warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and liberates one who bathes in it from all sins.

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's place of bhajana

Below the temple of Caurāsī-khambā, near Sānudrika-kūpa, is Sanātana Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭī* situated inside a cave. Sanātana Gosvāmī would come to Gokula occasionally. He would perform *bhajana* at this place, and daily take *darśana* of Śrī Madana-Gopāla.⁶

Once, Sanātana Gosvāmī was amazed by an extraordinary child he saw playing in the soft sand on the bank of the Yamunā. When the child had finished his game, Sanātana Gosvāmī followed him into the temple of Śrī Madana-Gopāla. Upon entering the temple, however, Sanātana Gosvāmī could only see the deity. Some time later in Mathurā, Sanātana Gosvāmī saw that same Śrī

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Madana-Gopāla playing in the house of a Caubāin with her son. Śrī Madana-Gopāla requested Sanātana to take Him with him to Vṛndāvana. Sanātana Gosvāmī brought Him to his *bhajana-kuṭī*, and later had a magnificent temple constructed for Him, where he arranged for His service and worship.

Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa

This place lies approximately one mile east of Nanda-bhavana, the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa. Here, the small boy Kṛṣṇa ate earth while playing with the cowherd boys. The boys saw this and told Mother Yaśodā, who asked Balarāma about it. Balarāma verified the fact. She went to Kṛṣṇa and asked Him herself, “Have You eaten clay?”

He replied, “No, Maiyā, I did not eat clay.”

“All right, Kanhaiyā, open Your mouth and show me.”

“You can see, Maiyā,” He said as He opened His mouth.



Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa



Temple at Brahmāṇḍa-gḥāṭa

Looking into Kanhaiyā’s mouth, Maiyā became dumbstruck. There, she saw innumerable universes, countless Brahmās, Viṣṇus and Maheśas (Śivas), and all moving and non-moving entities. She closed her eyes in fear and thought, “What is this that I am seeing? Is it an illusion or someone’s magical powers?” Upon opening her eyes, Mother Yaśodā saw that Kanhaiyā was sitting on her lap. She returned to the house and called the *brāhmaṇas*, who recited blessings to pacify the wrath of the demigods. She also donated cows and other valuables to the *brāhmaṇas*.

Although Yaśodā-maiyā had directly witnessed Kṛṣṇa’s quality of being Bhagavān (*bhagavattā*) in the form of seeing countless universes and all animate and inanimate objects situated within His mouth, she never accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Lord. Her *vātsalya-prema*, or motherly love, for Him blossomed rather than weakened. By contrast, when Devakī and Vasudeva beheld Kṛṣṇa’s four-armed form, their *vātsalya-prema* weakened. Similarly, Arjuna’s *sakhya-bhāva* (mood of friendship) also weakened when he saw Kṛṣṇa’s universal form. Devakī, Vasudeva and Arjuna folded

their hands and began to glorify Kṛṣṇa and pray to Him. In Vraja, however, the *prema* of the Vrajavāsīs does not weaken even when Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself as the Supreme Lord. Their sweet mood towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa never diminishes because they never accept Him as Bhagavān.

Another time, the small boy Kṛṣṇa was playing here with His companions, the cowherd boys, when the boys unexpectedly began to tease Him and laugh and clap. At first, Kanhaiyā could not understand why, but quite soon He did. Dāma, Śrīdāma, Madhumaṅgala and the other cowherd boys were saying, “Nanda Bābā is fair-complexioned and Yaśodā-maiyā is fair-complexioned, but You are black. Why? The fact is that You were not born from Yaśodā-maiyā’s womb. Someone else gave birth to You, but being unable to bring You up, they put You in the hollow of a banyan tree. The supremely merciful Nanda Bābā found You there crying helplessly. He picked You up and placed You in the lap of Mother Yaśodā, but, in reality, You are not the son of Nanda and Yaśodā.”

Kanhaiyā stopped playing and went home weeping. He began to roll around the courtyard, crying. Mother Yaśodā affectionately picked Him up in her arms and tried to find out why He was crying. But today Kanhaiyā refused to sit in her lap. She forcibly took Him in her arms, brushed the dust from His limbs, and asked Him what had happened. After Kanhaiyā calmed down a little, He said, “Dāma, Śrīdāma and the other cowherd boys are saying, ‘You were not born from Maiyā’s womb. Bābā is fair-complexioned and Maiyā is fair-complexioned, so where did You, who are black, come from?’”

Hearing this, Maiyā started laughing and said, “O my *lālā*, who else is saying this?”

“Dāu Bhaiyā.”

Maiyā, put her hand on Kṛṣṇa’s forehead and said, “I take an oath before Śrī Nārāyaṇa that You are my son born from my

womb. I will chastise those children.” She then began to breast-feed Kṛṣṇa.

In reality, Nanda Bābā was of a fair complexion, but Mother Yaśodā, who was a very beautiful *gopī*, was slightly dark in hue. How else could Kṛṣṇa have been so beautiful if He had not been born from Mother Yaśodā’s womb? But because Kanhaiyā was somewhat darker than His mother, the boys teased Him about it. This place, which treasures this pastime, can still be seen today.

Cintāharaṇa-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* lies on the bank of Śrī Yamunā near Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa to its east. Cintāharaṇa Mahādeva, who is worshipped by the Vrajavāsīs, is present here. When Mother Yaśodā saw the universes in Kanhaiyā’s mouth, she became extremely anxious for His welfare and prayed to Cintāharaṇa Mahādeva for Kṛṣṇa’s safety. *Cintāharaṇa* means “removing anxieties”.

Kole-ghāṭa

Kole-ghāṭa is situated across the Yamunā from Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa, towards Mathurā. Śrī Vasudeva, along with the newborn baby Kṛṣṇa, crossed the Yamunā here on his way to Nanda-bhavana in Gokula. When he was half way across, the Yamunā rose up so that she could touch Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s feet. Vasudeva held Kṛṣṇa higher. When the water reached Vasudeva’s neck, he became perplexed and anxious for the child’s protection. He cried out, “*Ko leve? – Who will save Him?*” Vajranābha therefore named this *ghāṭa* Kole-ghāṭa, which is derived from the phrase *ko leve*.

Seeing the level of the Yamunā rise, baby Kṛṣṇa touched Yamunā-devī’s lap (*kola*) with His lotus feet, and at once the Yamunā’s waters began to recede. The Yamunā’s shifting waters created an island, which became the location of Kolegaon.

Uthaleśvara and Pāṇḍeśvara Mahādevas are situated on the bank of Kole-ghāṭa.

Devanagara

This is the place of residence of Devaspati Gopa and is situated about ten miles north of Dāūjī. Places of *darśana* are Rāmasāgarakuṇḍa, an ancient and large *kadamba* tree, and the *govardhana-śila* worshipped by Devaspati Gopa. Nanda Rāya's *baiṭhaka* is in the village of Hātaurā near Dāūjī.

The place where ears were pierced (Karṇa-chedana sthāna)

The *karṇa-chedana saṁskāra*, or ear-piercing ceremony, of the small boys Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma took place here. This village is currently known as Karṇāvala. One can have *darśana* of Karṇabedha-kūpa, Ratnacauka, and of the deities of Śrī Madana-mohana and Mādhavarāya here.

ŚRĪ CAITANYA MAHĀPRABHU IN MAHĀVANA

Before Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana's arrival in Vraja, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to Vraja and wandered throughout its forests. At the place of Kṛṣṇa's birth in Mahāvana, Mahāprabhu took *darśana* of Śrī Madana-mohana and, overwhelmed with *prema*, began to dance as streams of tears flowed from His eyes. Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa's birthplace has been described in *Bhakti-ratnākara*:

*ahe śrīnivāsa! kṛṣṇa caitanya ethāya
janmotsava sthāna dekhi ullāsa hiyāya
bhāvāveśe prabhu nṛtya, gīte magna hailā
kṛpā kari sarvacitta ākarṣaṇa kailā*

“O Śrīnivāsa, seeing the place of Kṛṣṇa's birth festival Śrī Caitanya became overwhelmed with ecstatic joy. He became absorbed in dancing and singing. By His mercy He attracted the hearts of everyone.”

GOKULA

Mahāvana and Gokula are in fact one and the same place. Nanda Bābā along with his family members journeyed from Nandagaon to Bṛhadvana, or Mahāvana, where they settled down. Mahāvana is called Gokula because *go* (cows), *goṡas*, *goṡīs* and so forth resided here. At the time of Nanda Bābā, Gokula was not a separate village or town. In fact, the current village of Gokula is a recent settlement. Nanda Bābā’s cowshed was in Gokula.

About five hundred years ago, after Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s arrival in Vraja, Śrī Vallabhācārya sat on this beautiful bank beside the Yamunā and read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from beginning to end. Śrī Vallabhācārya’s son, Śrī Viṡṡhalācārya, and his son, Śrī Gokulanātha, also have sitting-places (*baiṡhakas*) here. In fact, Śrī Viṡṡhalācārya tricked Aurangzeb and leased this place in his own name. It was actually he who founded Gokula. After them, the son of Śrī Gokulanātha resided here together with his family members. The *gosvāmīs* of the dynasty of Śrī Vallabha only lived in Gokula, where they established the deities of Mathureśa, Viṡṡhalanātha, Dvārikādhīśa, Gokula-candramā, Bāla-Kṛṡṡṇa and Śrī Madana-mohana. Later, Śrī Mathureśa went to Koṡā, Śrī Viṡṡhalanātha to Nāthadvārā, Śrī Dvārakādhīśa to Kāṅkraulī, Gokula-candramā to Kāmyavana, Śrī Bāla-Kṛṡṡṇa to Sūrata and Madana-mohana to Kāmyavana. Since the *gosvāmīs* in the dynasty of Śrī Vallabha reside in Gokula, they are well-known as the Gokula *gosvāmīs*.

Śrī ṡhākurānī-ghāṡa

This is the main *ghāṡa* in Gokula and the place where Śrī Vallabhācārya received *darśana* of Śrī Yamunā Mahārānī. He began to give initiation (*dīkṡā*) at this place. This *ghāṡa* is thus a place of great significance to the Vaiṡṡnavas of the Vallabha *sampradāya*.

Govinda-ghāṭa

When Śrī Vallabhācārya came to Vraja, he visited this *ghāṭa* at the Yamunā, finding it extremely attractive. He heard from the respectable elderly Vrajavāsīs about Nanda Bābā's cowshed nearby. They informed him that the *ghāṭa* where he was sitting was well known by the name of Govinda-ghāṭa. Śrī Vallabhācārya became so delighted that he performed a *Bhāgavata-saptāha* (recitation of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for seven days) under the *śamī* tree here.

Other places of *darśana* in Gokula include the garden of Gokulanātha, Bājana-ṭilā, Simhapauḍī, Yaśodā-ghāṭa, the nearby temple of Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha, Śrī Madana-mohana Temple, Śrī Mādhavarāya Temple, Śrī Gokulanātha Temple, Śrī Navanītapriya Temple, Śrī Dvārakānātha Temple, the nearby *brahmachakra* tree, Śrī Gokula-candramā Temple, Śrī Mathurānātha Temple, the place where Śrī Nanda Mahārāja kept his cart, and so forth.

In the village of Naurāṅgabāda, which lies across the Yamunā facing Gokula, are the temple of Śrī Gaṅgājī and other places of *darśana*.



Harī-kathā in Rāval

Rāval



āval is the appearance place of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who is the embodiment of *mahābhāva*, the essence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pleasure potency. She is also Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti*, or internal energy. Only by great fortune will someone desire to visit this holy place, and reverentially touch and remember it.

The pastime of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's appearance in this world is narrated differently in different eras (*kalpa-bheda*).

vṛṣabhānūdadhī-nava-śaṣī-lekhe!
lalitā-sakhi! guṇa-ramita-viśākhē!

“O new moon arisen from the ocean of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, O dear most friend of Lalitā, O You who have enchanted and made Viśākhā happy with Your qualities of friendship, compassion and loyalty to Kṛṣṇa.”

Śrīmatī Rādhikā is most loved by Her father Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja. For this reason, devotees usually refer to Her as “Vṛṣabhānu-nandini” (the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja). Very few call Her “Kīrtidā-nandini” (the daughter of Kīrtidā-devī).

The word *rāvala* means “an influential landlord”. This place is named after Śrī Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, who was a most influential landlord.

Once, in the early morning, when Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja went to bathe in the Yamunā, he saw in the water a radiant lotus flower of one hundred petals. In the middle of that flower lay a beautiful small baby, Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself. He tenderly lifted Her into His arms and took Her home, where he placed Her in the lap of his wife Kīrtidā.



The Yamunā at Rāval

Sometimes Śrīmatī Rādhikā appears in Varsānā, where every morning, Śrī Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja goes to Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa. On one such morning he found Śrīmatī Rādhikā on a lotus flower in the *kuṇḍa*. In other eras this takes place at Rāval.

Śrī Nārada knew that the possessor of all powers, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, already had appeared on this earth and concluded that the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa's complete potency, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, must have surely appeared here also. He proceeded to search for Her high and low. He finally arrived at the house of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja. "Do you have a child?" Nārada asked him.



The deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Rāval

“Yes, I have a son named Śrīdāma.”

“Do you also have a daughter?” Nārada asked.

“Yes, we also have a daughter.”

“I want to see Her and bless Her.” Nārada said, “I also want to do Her horoscope.”

Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja became delighted and brought out his baby girl. Nārada then asked him to fetch the necessary items to bless the child and do Her horoscope. As soon as he had left the room, Nārada turned to Śrīmatījī and began to pray, “*Kadā kariṣyasīha mām kṛpā-kaṭākṣa-bhājanam* – O young daughter of Vṛṣabhānu, when will You bless me with Your merciful glance?”

Then, Śrīmatī Rādhājī, along with Lalitā, Viśākhā and Her other *sakhīs* gave Nārada *darśana* of Her eternal form as a fresh youth. Upon beholding this form, Śrī Nārada became overwhelmed with ecstatic, transcendental bliss.

The desire to become a maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhikā awakens in the heart of one who comes to this place, hears pure Vaiṣṇavas speak *hari-kathā* here and touches its sacred dust.

Endnotes

- ¹ golokarūpiṇe tubhyaṁ
gokulāya namo namaḥ
atidīrghāya ramyāya
dvāvimśadyojanāyate
Bhaviṣya Purāna (Uttara-khaṇḍa)
- ² ekavimsati tīrthānām
yuktam bhūriguṇānvitam
yamalāṛjuna puṇyātmānam
nanda-kūpaṁ tathaiiva ca
cintāharaṇam brahmaṇḍam
kuṇḍam sārasvatam tathā
sarasvatī-śilā tatra
viṣṇu-kuṇḍam samanvitam
karṇa-kūpaṁ kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍam
goḷa-kūpaṁ tathaiiva ca
ramaṇam ramaṇa-sthānam
tṛṇāvartākhyā-pātanam
pūtānā-pātanasthānam
tṛṇāvartākhyā-pātanam
nanda-harmya nandageha
ghaṭam ramaṇa-samjñakam
mathurānāthodbhavam kṣetram
puṇyam pāpa-pranāśanam
janma-sthānam tu śeṣasya
janma yogamāyayā
- ³ nandas tv ātmaja utpanne
jātāhlādo mahā-manāḥ
āhūya viprāna veda jñān
snātaḥ śucir alaṅkṛtaḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.5.1)
- ⁴ śrutim apare smṛtim itare
bhāratam anye bhajantu bhava-bhitāḥ
aham iha nandaṁ vande
yasyālinde param brahma
Śrī Padyāvalī (text 127)
- ⁵ daityo nāmnā tṛṇāvartāḥ
kāmsa-bhṛtyaḥ praṇoditāḥ
cakravāta-svarūpeṇa
jahārāsīnam arbhakam
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.7.20)
- ⁶ sanātana madanagopāla darśane
mahāsukha pāīyā rahe mahāvane
Bhakti-ratnākara



“Akrūra remained in the water to chant the mantra of his worshipful Lord, Sanātana Brahma (four-armed Viṣṇu), and meditate upon Him.

On this day, however, instead of having darśana of his worshipful Sanātana Brahma in his meditation, he saw the forms of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”





AKRŪRA-ghāṭa

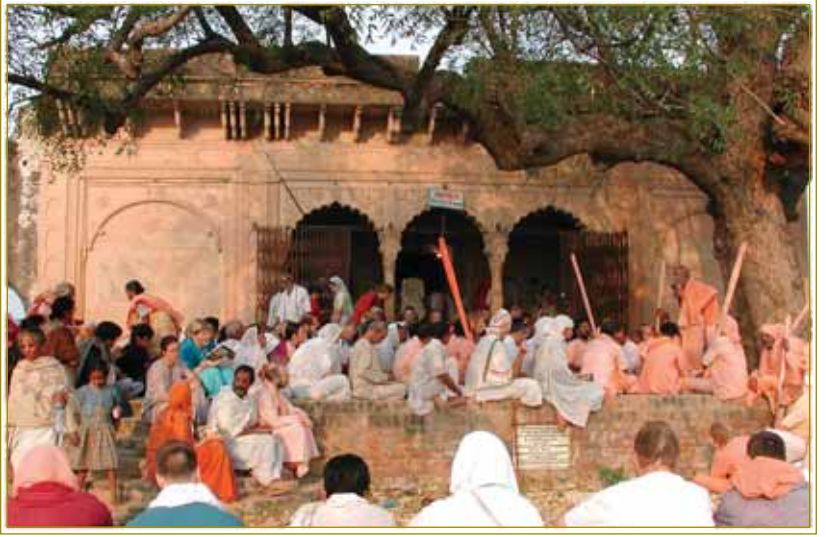






krūra-ghāṭa is situated four miles north of Mathurā and one mile south of Vṛndāvana. Nearby is Akrūra-gaon.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva were seated on Akrūra's chariot as Akrūra was bringing Them from Nandagaon to Mathurā. Akrūra stopped the chariot at this place and, leaving Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva on it, went alone to bathe in a deep pool in the Yamunā and perform his other regular morning duties. Akrūra remained in the water to chant the *mantra* of his worshipful Lord, Sanātana Brahma (four-armed Viṣṇu), and meditate upon Him. On this day, however, instead of having *darśana* of his worshipful Sanātana Brahma in his meditation, he saw the forms of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Akrūra became confused. He came out of the water, and looked towards the chariot, where he saw Rāma and Kṛṣṇa sitting. Again, when he went into the water, dipped in it and he saw Them there also. He



Akrūra-ghāṭa

was now fully confident that Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa were truly the complete Sanātana Brahma.

The Gauḍīya *gosvāmīs* have given an excellent philosophical conclusion in explanation of this incident. Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rohiṇī-nandana Śrī Rāma never leave Vṛndāvana to go elsewhere. Therefore, Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rohiṇī-nandana Śrī Rāma only came with Akrūra as far as Akrūra-ghāṭa, which marks the line of demarcation between Mathurā and Vṛndāvana. Thereafter, They both remained in Vṛndāvana in Their unmanifest (*aprakāṣa*) forms. It was Devakī-nandana or Vasudeva-nandana Śrī Balarāma, and Devakī-nandana or Vasudeva-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, that travelled on the chariot with Akrūra from Akrūra-ghāṭa to Mathurā and performed pastimes there.

According to *tattva*, Yaśodā-nandana and Devakī-nandana are actually one, but from the viewpoint of *rasa* there is a difference between Them.

Once, Nanda Bābā was observing Ekādaśī without even drinking water. That very night also saw the start of Dvādaśī. Nanda



The deities at Akrūra-ghāṭa

Bābā entered the water of the Yamunā to take bath but, because on that day this was an inauspicious time the servants of Varuṇadeva captured him and brought him to Varuṇaloka. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to Varuṇaloka, where Śrī Varuṇadeva worshipped Him with gifts, and returned Śrī Nanda Bābā to Him with honour.

This incident surprised Śrī Nanda Bābā, who narrated it to the Vrajavāsīs the next day. They requested Śrī Kṛṣṇa to give them *darśana* of His supreme abode. At that very place where the most merciful Bhagavān later gave Akrūra *darśana* of his worshipful deity, He now gave the Vrajavāsīs *darśana* of His eternal Brahma-loka. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.28.14, 16) describes this as follows:

*iti sañcintya bhagavān mahā-kārūṇiko hariḥ
darśayām āsa lokam svam goṇānām tamasah param
te tu brahma-hṛdam nītā magnāḥ kṛṣṇena coddhṛtāḥ
dadṛśur brahmaṇo lokam yatrākṛūro 'dhyagāt purā*

“Considering the thoughts of the cowherd men, the all-merciful Bhagavān Śrī Hari showed them His own abode, which is beyond material darkness. They were brought to Brahma-hrada, submerged into the water by Kṛṣṇa and then lifted out. From that very place where Akrūra beheld his worshipful deity, the cowherd men had *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental abode.”

Millions of sacred places (*tīrthas*) are present at Akrūra-ghāṭa. There is a sacred injunction to take a bath here at the time of a solar eclipse.¹

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to Vṛndāvana from Jagannātha Purī via the Jhārakhaṇḍa path, there was no settlement in Vṛndāvana, only a deep forest. At night, Mahāprabhu would reside at Akrūra-ghāṭa, and at dawn He would sit at Imlitalā-ghāṭa on the bank of the Yamunā in Vṛndāvana. Being overwhelmed with *prema*, Mahāprabhu would chant *harināma* there until the afternoon. An uninterrupted stream of tears flowed from His eyes,

and brightly shining *aṣṭa-sāttvika* transformations were evident on the limbs of His body. Śrī Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya was the only person with Him at that time. Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta*'s narration of this melts the heart.

In ancient times, Śānta Ṛṣi performed a sacrifice for King Bṛhadsena here. Another name of Akrūra-ghāṭa is Brahma-hrada, because here Kṛṣṇa gave the cowherd men *darśana* of Brahma-dhāma. Akrūra also received *darśana* of the complete Sanātana Brahma here.

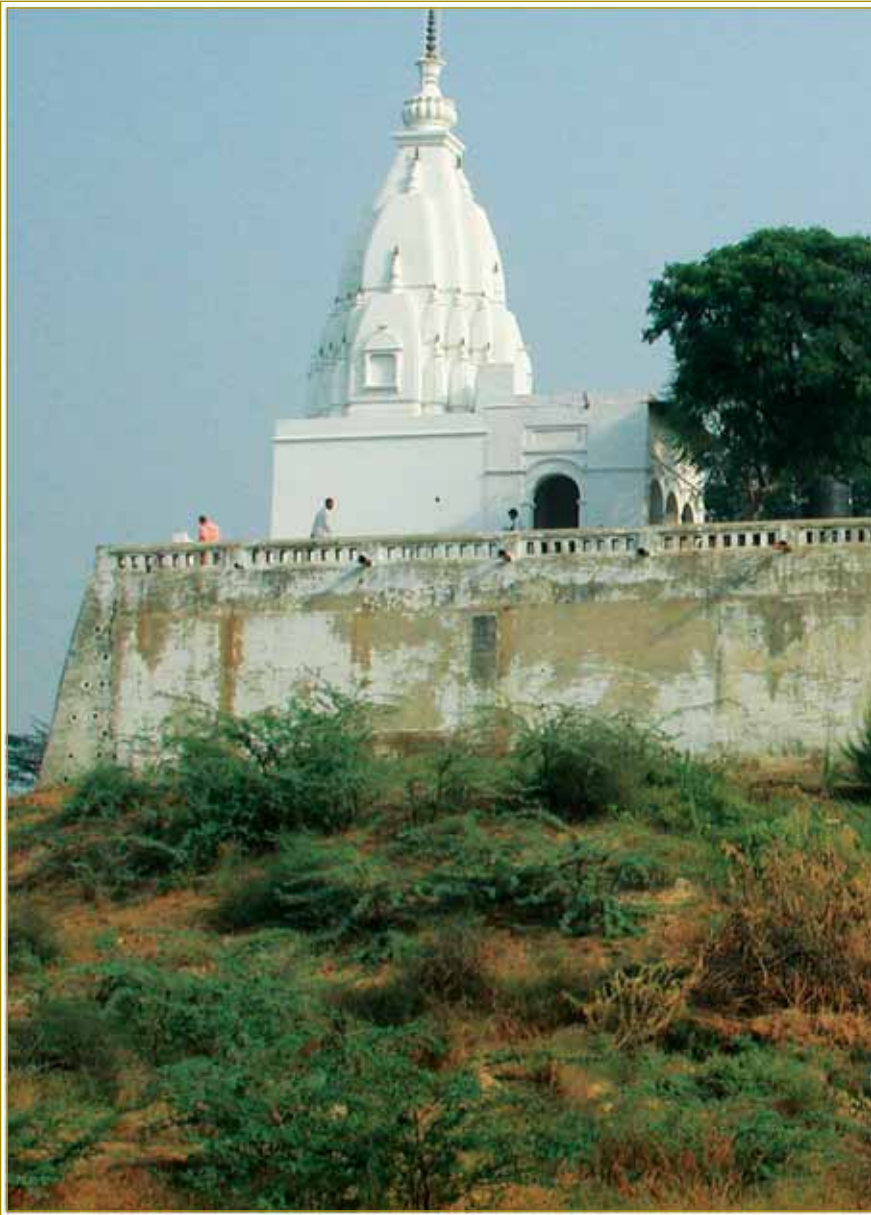
Yajña-sthala

Near Akrūra-ghāṭa is the sacrificial arena (*yajña-sthala*) of the Mathurā *brāhmaṇas*. Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd friends were grazing the cows near Yajña-sthala. Feeling hungry, Kṛṣṇa sent the *sakhās* to beg for foodstuffs from the *brāhmaṇas* who were performing a sacrifice at this place. However, because they were engrossed in their sacrifice, those non-devotional *brāhmaṇas* refused to give them anything. The *sakhās* were insulted and returned to Kṛṣṇa, who told them to go and beg something from the wives of those *brāhmaṇas*.

Bhojana-sthala (Bhātrōla-gaon)

Here, Kṛṣṇa relished various delicious cooked grains and foodstuffs brought by the *yajña-patnīs*, the wives of the *brāhmaṇas*.

Having been persuaded by Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boys had gone to the residence of the *yajña-patnīs* and begged for some foodstuffs for Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva. Simply upon hearing the names of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the *yajña-patnīs* became overwhelmed with transcendental emotions. They left their homes to have *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa, eagerly bringing various delicious cooked foodstuffs on large plates. Nothing could stop them, not even the objections of their husbands. Some *brāhmaṇas* forcefully locked their wives in their houses, but these women gave up their bodies in the fire of



Bhātrōla



separation from Kṛṣṇa and went to meet Him. When the *brāhmaṇis* approached Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they became enchanted upon seeing His dark-complexioned form, which resembles a fresh rain cloud. The yellow garments on His dark-complexioned limbs wavered like steady lightening.

*śyāmaṁ hiraṇya-paridhiṁ vanamālya-barha-
dhātu-pravāla-naṭa-veṣam anuvratāmse
vinyasta-hastam itareṇa dhunānam abjaṁ
karṇotpalālaka-kapola-mukhābja-hāsam
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.23.22)*

“Kṛṣṇa’s complexion is a blackish-blue hue like a water-laden rain cloud, and His splendid cloth, appears like a flash of lightning. Cresting His head is a peacock feather, and each limb of His body is decorated with exquisite patterns of paint made from coloured forest minerals. Sprigs of new leaves and blossoms adorn His body, and upon His neck an enchanting forest-flower garland of five colours hangs down to His knees. Attired in this way like a dramatic dancer, He rests one hand on His friend’s shoulder, and with the other twirls a pastime lotus [as if to twist our hearts]. Lilies grace His ears, curly locks of hair splash against His cheeks, and His lotus face blossoms with a gentle smile.”

The wives of the *brāhmaṇas* became so overwhelmed with *prema* upon seeing Kṛṣṇa that they did not want to return home to their husbands. After Kṛṣṇa instructed them to go, however, they somehow readied themselves to do so. Upon returning home, they found that the attitude of their husbands had entirely changed. The *brāhmaṇas* now began to praise their wives’ transcendental devotion to Kṛṣṇa, and they condemned their three types of birth – namely seminal, *brahminical* and sacrificial – and their knowledge and expertise in Vedic rituals.²

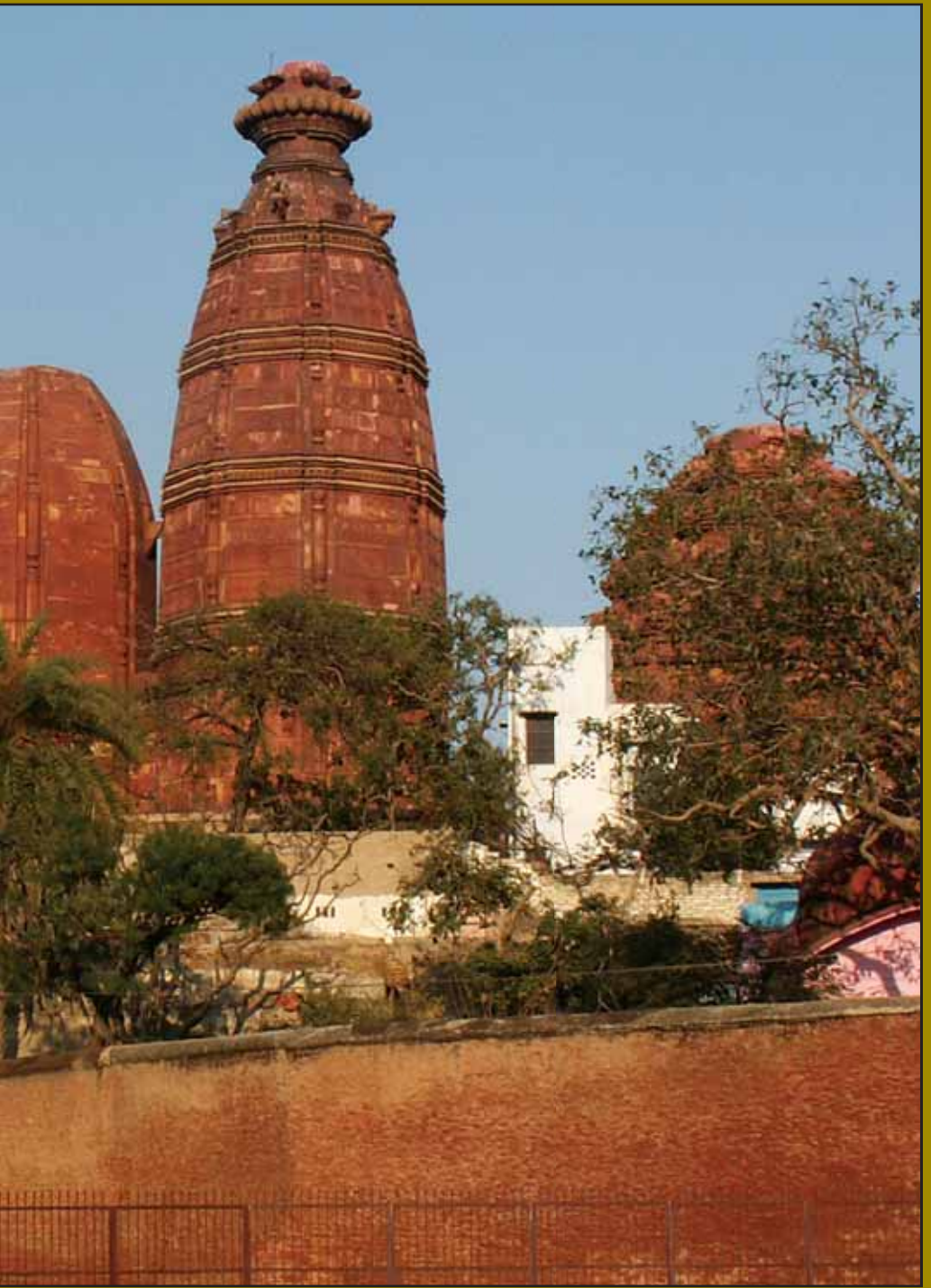
There is a point to be considered here. Kṛṣṇa told the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* to return home, and they obeyed Him. When the *gopa-ramaṇīs* heard the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, they came to Kṛṣṇa, and He similarly told them to return to their husbands. They did not return, however, and Kṛṣṇa danced and performed *rāsa-līlā* with them. How is this? The answer is that only the *gopīs* have the qualification to participate in Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līlā* and other such pastimes. In Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa wears the dress of a *gopa* and He is absorbed in the mood of a *gopa*. Therefore, only the *gopīs* who themselves took birth from the wombs of *gopīs* have the qualification to participate in Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa* and other pastimes in the *nikuñjas*. Lakṣmī from Vaikuṅṭha and the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* have no qualification to enter these confidential pastimes. They were therefore sent away. It may be that after performing arduous worship for many lifetimes under the guidance of the *rāgātmikā gopīs*, such personalities may one day take a birth from the wombs of *gopīs* in manifested Vraja. Then, by the influence of their association with eternally liberated *gopīs*, they may eventually become qualified to serve in the *nikuñjas* and so forth.

Endnotes

- ¹ *viṣṇu-loka prada tīrtha muktākrūrā pradāyine
kṛṣṇokṣaṇa prasādāya namaste viṣṇurūpine*
Ādi-varāha Purāṇa
- ² *dṛṣṭvā strīṇām bhagavati kṛṣṇe bhaktim alaukikīm
ātmānam ca tayā hīnam anutaptā vyagarhayan
dhig janma nas tri-vṛd yat tad dhig vrataṁ dhig bahu-jñatām
dhik kulaṁ dhik kriyā-dākṣyaṁ vimukhā ye tv adhokṣaje*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.23.39–40)

कोस-मगधस्य राजधानी







*“Ah, in all three worlds, only
Śrī Vṛndāvana and the gopa-ramaṇīs
living in Vṛndāvana are fortunate,
because in that place the original
Supreme Person, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, disguised
as a human being, performs human-like
pastimes under the arrangement of Yogamāyā.
Adorned with a multi-coloured garland of
forest-flowers, He grazes
the cows with Baladeva and the sakhās,
vibrating His sweet flute and absorbed
in various kinds of playful pastimes.”*





वृण्णपवणा







his supremely charming forest known as Vṛndāvana is expertly served by Śrī Vṛndā-devī and is densely filled with many types of *sevā-kuñjas* and *keli-kuñjas*. Vṛndā-devī eternally resides here, and is the protector, nourisher and forest goddess (*vana-devī*) of Śrī Vṛndāvana. All the trees, creepers, birds and animals of Vṛndāvana are under her jurisdiction, and they are dependent upon and obedient to her. She constantly engages countless *gopīs* in service in the *kuñjas*, and she is therefore the presiding deity of *kuñja-sevā*.

It is important to understand Yogamāyā (the collective internal energy of the Supreme Lord – *samaṣṭibhūtā svarūpa-śakti*), Paurṇamāsī (the potency behind all of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes – *parākhyā mahā-śakti*) and Vṛndā-devī, as well as their respective functions. Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī is the pastime incarnation (*līlā-avatāra*) of Yogamāyā; which means that when Yogamāyā takes a tangible

form, she becomes Paurṇamāsī. Paurṇamāsī's function is to attend to all the details of the various pastimes in the forests and in the villages of the cow herders (*goṣṭhas*). Vṛndā-devī, on the other hand, who is the personification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *līlākhyā mahā-śakti* (His pastime potency) and also a manifestation of Yogamāyā, makes all the arrangements for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's confidential pastimes in the *kuñjas*, and for *rāsa-vilāsa* and so on.

Vṛndā-devī's father is Candrabhānu, her mother is Phullarā Gopī and her husband is Mahīpāla. All of them eternally reside in Vṛndāvana. Vṛndā-devī is the most important among all the *sakhī* messengers, such as Vṛndārikā, Melā and Muralī. Her function is to skilfully arrange the meeting of the Divine Couple through various means and, therefore, she is the *vana-devī* of Vṛndāvana. Vṛndā-devī has dedicated her kingdom of Vṛndāvana, which she wonderfully serves, protects and nourishes, at the lotus feet of Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who is the embodiment of *mahābhāva*. Therefore, Śrīmatī Rādhikā is truly Vṛndāvanēśvarī, the Queen of Vṛndāvana.

The Purāṇas state that Mahārāja Kedāra's daughter, who is described as Vṛndā-devī; King Kuśadhvaja's daughter, whom the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* describes as Tulasī, the wife of Śaṅkhacūḍa; and Vṛndā, or Tulasī, the beloved of Hari who appears in the form of a plant on the Earth planet; are *aṅśa*, *prakāśa*, and *kalā-svarūpa* of Vṛndā-devī, who is a direct expansion of the personal form (*kāya-vyūhā svarūpā*) of *sarva-śaktimayī* Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Vṛndā-devī eternally resides in Vṛndāvana, and she is continuously engaged in service to the Divine Couple in the *nikuñjas* of Vṛndāvana. Indeed, Vṛndāvana is known by the name of this Vṛndā-devī.

Descriptions of the abundant glories of Śrī Vṛndāvana are found throughout *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the crown jewel of all evidences (*pramāṇas*). Śrī Nanda Bābā's minister and elder brother Śrī Upānanda says:

*vanam vṛndāvanam nāma paśavyam nava-kānanam
goṣa-gopī-gavām sevyaṁ puṇyādri-tṛṇa-vīrudham*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.11.28)

“We should not stay in this Gokula-Mahāvana which is constantly in turmoil. As *goṣas* and *gopīs*, our prime duty is to immediately take up residence in Vṛndāvana, whose charm is unrivalled, being enchanting in every respect. It is covered with lush grass, beautified with various trees, creepers and sacred mountains, and protected in all respects to provide safety to cows and other animals.”

Upon observing the wonderful, sweet pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Caturmukha Brahmā became very astonished and prayed with folded hands:

*tad bhūri-bhāgyam iha janma kim apy aṭavyām
yad gokule 'pi katamāṅghri-rajo-'bhiṣekam
yaj-jīvitam tu nikhilam bhagavān mukundas
tv adyāpi yat-pada-rajah śruti-mṛgyam eva*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.34)

“It would be my great good fortune to take birth as a blade of grass, a shrub or any other species which can be anointed with the dust falling from the lotus feet of any of the Vrajavāsīs of Vṛndāvana. Even the Śrutis, who have been searching for so long, have not yet received the dust of the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord Mukunda, who is the life and soul of these Vrajavāsīs. If it is impossible for me to take birth in any species in Vṛndāvana, then let me take birth even as a rock on the border of Nanda-Gokula. The ladies who sweep the streets will then rub their feet on this rock to clean them, and by this I will receive the good fortune of touching the dust of their feet.”

Uddhava, who is the highest among the five kinds of devotees (a *premātura bhakta*), prays:

*āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syām
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhīnām
yā dustyajāṁ sva-janam ārya-pathaṁ ca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-padaṁ śrutibhir vimṛgyām*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.61)

“I would consider it my greatest fortune to take birth as a shrub, creeper, or any other plant in this Vṛndāvana and thus be sprinkled by the foot dust of these *gopīs*. They have given up everything, including their husbands, sons and other family members, the path of chastity (*ārya-dharma*), and their honour in society (*loka-lajjā*), which are all very difficult to renounce. Thus their *prema* has enchanted even the Supreme Lord Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is searched for by the Śrutis.”

The beautiful young women of Mathurā present in Kāṁsa’s wrestling arena lavishly praised Vṛndāvana by saying:

*puṅyā bata vraja-bhuvo yad ayaṁ nṛ-liṅga
gūḍhaḥ purāṇa-puruṣo vana-citra-mālyah
gāḥ pālayan saha-balaḥ kvaṇayamś ca veṇuṁ
vikrīḍayāñcati giritra-ramārcitāṅghriḥ*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.44.13)

“Ah, in all three worlds, only Śrī Vṛndāvana and the *gopā-ramaṇīs* living in Vṛndāvana are fortunate, because in that place the original Supreme Person, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, disguised as a human being, performs human-like pastimes under the arrangement of Yogamāyā. Adorned with a multi-coloured garland of forest-flowers, He grazes the cows with Baladeva and the *sakhās*, vibrating His sweet flute and absorbed in various kinds of playful pastimes.”

Being intoxicated by *kṛṣṇa-prema*, one *gopī* addresses another *gopī*, saying:

*vṛndāvanam sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīrtim
yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyam
preksyādri-sānv-avaratānya-samasta-sattvam
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.21.10)*

“O *sakhī*, this *Vṛndāvana* is spreading the fame of the Earth planet even above that of *Vaikuṅṭha*, because it is splendidly decorated with the marks of the lotus feet of *Yaśodā-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. Friend, when *rasikendra Śrī Kṛṣṇa* plays on His flute, which enchants the whole world, the peacocks become intoxicated and, thinking the sound of the flute to be the roaring thunder of the clouds, spread their tail feathers and begin to dance. Seeing this, the birds and animals roaming on the mountain summits become completely stunned and relish the sound of the flute with their ears and the dance of the peacocks with their eyes.”

What to speak of others, even the supremely *rasika* and *bhavuka Śukadeva Gosvāmī* is mesmerised by *Vṛndāvana*, and repeatedly praises this land:

*barhāpīḍam naṭa-vara-vapuḥ karṇayoḥ karṇikāram
bibhrad vāsaḥ kanaka-kapiśam vaijayantīm ca mālām
randhrān veṇor adhara-sudhayāpūrayan gopa-vṛndair
vṛndāraṇyam sva-pada ramaṇam prāviśad gīta-kīrtiḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.21.5)*

“*Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, the enchanter of the whole world, dressed as the best of dancers (*naṭavara*), entered the supremely charming *Vṛndāvana*, beautifying it with the marks of His lotus feet. His head was decorated with a peacock feather. He wore fragrant yellow *karnikara* flowers behind His ears, a radiant golden

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garment on His dark-complexioned limbs, and around His neck a garland of forest flowers made of five different coloured flowers, that extended down to His lotus feet. He poured the nectar from His lips through the holes of His flute, enchanting everyone by its sweet sound, including both moveable and immovable entities. The cowherd boys followed Him, singing His glories.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa never leaves this sweet Vṛndāvana, which is inundated with the *rasa* of complete transcendental bliss. *Vṛndāvanam parityajya pādamekaṁ na gacchati (Brahma-yāmala)*.

One *rasika* devotee poet extracted the essence of the Śrutis and Purāṇas in regard to Vṛndāvana. As if putting the vast ocean into a water pot, he summed it up accurately by saying:

*braj samudr mathurā kamal vṛndāvan makarand
braj vanitā sab puṣp haiṁ madhukar gokulcand*

“Vraja is like the ocean, Mathurā like the lotus, and Vṛndāvana like the nectar-pollen. All the Vraja *gopīs* are like flowers, and Gokulacanda Kṛṣṇa is the bumblebee.”

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF ŚRĪ VṚNDĀVANA

Śrī Vṛndāvana is not merely a sacred place (*tīrtha*), but is Bhagavān’s own abode, or His own home. It is no exaggeration to say that Vṛndāvana is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s form (*svarūpa*) because Kṛṣṇa and His abode are non-different.

According to the Purāṇas, Devarṣi Nārada was once singing the glories of Śrī Hari on his *vīṇa* when he reached Prayāga. This Prayāga is Tīrtharāja, or the king of all sacred places. Prayāga welcomed him with great honour and narrated the story of how he became Tīrtharāja. Śrī Nārada said, “The Supreme Lord has given you the post of Tīrtharāja, but I have some doubt in this regard. Does Vṛndāvana ever come to make offerings to you like the other *tīrthas*?”

Tīrtharāja replied, “No.”

Śrī Nārada asked, “Then, what kind of Tīrtharāja are you?”

This statement pierced the heart of Tīrtharāja, but he understood it to be true. “How, then, am I Tīrtharāja?” he wondered. Thinking in this way, he went to the Supreme Lord.

Seeing Tīrtharāja approaching, Bhagavān honoured him appropriately and asked him why he had come. Tīrtharāja humbly replied, “Prabhu, You have appointed me as Tīrtharāja, but the *tīrtha* of Vṛndāvana never comes to make any offering to me. How can it be that I am Tīrtharāja? If a small *tīrtha* like Vṛndāvana does not accept my jurisdiction, then it is not at all appropriate for me to hold the title of Tīrtharāja.”

Upon hearing the statements of Prayāga Rāja, Bhagavān became silent for a moment. His eyes brimmed with tears as He remembered Vraja – cow grazing with His *sakhās*, the affection of Nanda Bābā and Mother Yaśodā, His beloved Kiśorī Śrī Rādhā, the *gopīs* and His *rāsa* dance with them – these memories appeared in His heart along with many others from Vraja. Bhagavān’s heart

melted. After composing Himself a little, He spoke very gravely. “Tīrtharāja, it is true that I have appointed you the king of all *tīrthas*, but I have not made you the king of My own home, Śrī Vṛndāvana. The land of Vṛndāvana is not only My home, but is the supreme place of My beloved Śrī Rādhā’s pastimes. She is indeed the mistress (*adhipati*) and sovereign (*iśvarī*) there. She is truly Vṛndāveśvarī, the Queen of Vṛndāvana. I also reside there eternally. You are Tīrtharāja, no doubt, but Vṛndāvana is not merely a *tīrtha*. You too can worship and serve Vṛndāvana in some way.”

Śrī Nārada has glorified Śrī Vṛndāvana not only here, but also to Bhakti-devī in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavat-māhātmya* (1.61, from *Padma Purāṇa*):

*vṛndāvanasya saṁyogāt punastvaṁ taruṇī navā
dhanyaṁ vṛndāvanaṁ tena bhaktir-nṛtyati yatra ca*

“O Devī, by coming to Vṛndāvana, you have again become a fresh young woman. Thus, this Vṛndāvana-dhāma, where *bhakti* is dancing everywhere, is blessed.”

The glories of Śrī Vṛndāvana are also mentioned in the *Mathurā-khaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*¹ and in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*².

“If Śrīman Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu had not appeared, then what would have become of us? How could we have tolerated living? In this universe, who would ever have come to know about the glories of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the topmost limit of *prema-rasa*? If Caitanya Mahāprabhu had not come, who would have had the intelligence to join the sweet *madhura-rasa* of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Vṛndāvana? Who else but Mahāprabhu could have bestowed the power to enter the *vraja-ramaṇīs*’ loving mood of service to the youthful Divine Couple?”

Upon the direct order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* re-established the pastime places of Vraja. Taking the help of various scriptures, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī, Śrī Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and others rediscovered these places through their untiring endeavours.

THE PASTIME PLACES OF ŚRĪ VṚNDĀVĀṆA

Bhagavatī Yamunā

Mahārānī Yamunā has the same darkish blue complexion as Kṛṣṇa. She assists in the playful amorous pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala in every respect, and flows on three sides of Vṛndāvana. To fully support the *rasa-vilāsa* of Priyā-Priyatama, she creates countless charming *nikuñjas* on both her banks with various kinds of dense trees and creepers laden with flowers and fruits.

She is ornamented and beautified with divine *ghāṭas* bedecked with jewels, and with various bowers made from *kadamba*, *tamāla*, *āmra*, *bakula* and other types of trees. The Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa perform water pastimes and boating pastimes with the *sakhīs* in the waters of Śrī Yamunā. This water is saturated with *prema* and is always decorated with seven-petalled lotuses. This Bhagavatī Yamunā, who serves the Youthful Couple eternally, is supremely worshipful.

In *Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka* (5.35) Śrīla Kavi-karṇapura glorifies Śrī Yamunā-devī as follows (also quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* 3.28):

cid-ānanda-bhānoḥ sadā nanda-sūnoḥ
para-prema-pātrī drava-brahma-gātrī
aghānām lavitrī jagat-kṣema-dhātrī
pavitri-kriyān no vapur-mitra-putrī

“I repeatedly offer prayers to Śrī Yamunā, the daughter of the Sungod, who is the bestower of *unnata-ujjala prema* for Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the transcendental sun. She embodies transcendental bliss and directly personifies the melted form of Parabrahma. Simply remembering her destroys all types of wickedness and great sins, thus rendering the heart





Śrī Yamunā

ŚRĪ VRĀJĀVĀṆA-DHĀMA

1. Kāliya-hrada,
Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's
bhajana-kuṭī & samādhi
2. Dvādaśāditya-tīlā,
Śrī Madana-mohana Temple,
Praskandana-kṣetra,
Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's *samādhi*
3. Advaitavaṭa
4. Dāna, Māna, Gumāna & Kuñja-galis
5. Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍiya Maṭha
6. Imlitalā
7. Gopinātha-bhavana
8. Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple
9. Jhāḍu-maṇḍala
10. Śrīngāravaṭa
11. Dhīra-samīra
12. Vaṁśivaṭa
13. Gopīśvara Mahādeva
14. Jñāna-gudaḍi
15. Brahma-kuṇḍa
16. Dāvānala-kuṇḍa
17. Śrī Govindajī Temple
18. Śrī Gopināthajī Temple
19. Śrī Rādhā-Rāmaṇa Temple
20. Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda
Temple
21. Śrī Śyāmasundara Temple
22. Śrī Bānke-bihārījī Temple
23. Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha Temple
24. Śrī Lālā Bābū Temple
25. Śrī Raṅgajī Temple
26. Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva
27. Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Temple
28. Śrī Bhāgavat-nivāsa
29. Rādhā-kūpa
30. Ramaṇa-retī
31. Varāha Temple
32. Gautama Muni *āśrama*





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pure. She bestows all auspiciousness upon the world, and can even infuse *vraja-rasa* into dry, desert-like hearts. May she purify us.”

*gaṅgādi-tīrtha-pariṣevita-pāda-padmām
goloka-saukhya-rasa-pūramahim mahimnā
āplāvitākhila-sudhāsu-jalām sukhābdhau
rādhā-mukunda-muditām yamunām namāmi*

“I offer obeisances time and again unto the beloved of Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Yamunā, whose lotus feet are always served by Gaṅgā, Godāvarī, Narmadā, Sindhu and other *tīrthas*. Śrī Yamunā is glorious as it is she who bestows service that is saturated with *rasa* to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala in Goloka-Vṛndāvana. In her nectar-filled waters, Śrī Rādhā-Mukunda remain immersed in an ocean of happiness.”

Sonaraka

This place lies about one mile west of the present day Kālīyādaha. Saubhari Ṛṣi’s hermitage was here. Before the time of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, Saubhari Ṛṣi performed austerities here for thousands of years. To conquer his senses, he remained standing in the water of the Yamunā during all seasons, including summer and winter. One day Garuḍa, an associate of the Supreme Lord, arrived here. Following his nature as a bird, he swallowed a big male fish right before everyone’s eyes. Seeing this, the fish community lamented and prayed to Saubhari Ṛṣi for retaliation. Engrossed in dry austerities and unaware of the glories of Bhagavān’s devotees, Saubhari Ṛṣi cursed Garuḍa, saying that if he were to come here again, his head would be cut off.

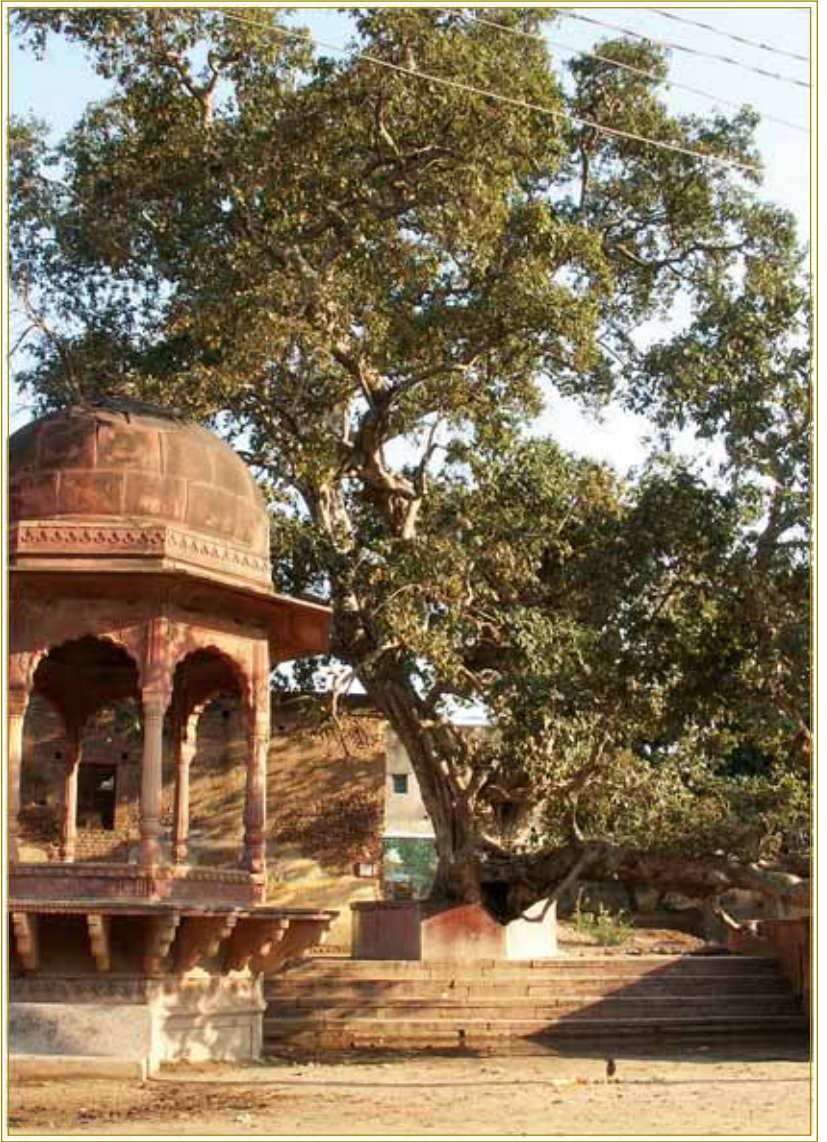
Saubhari Ṛṣi had cursed a great devotee, and, therefore, a desire arose in his heart to enjoy the material world. He came out of the waters of the Yamunā, and by his mystic power transformed himself into a young man. He married the many beautiful young daughters of Mahārāja Māndhātā, and remained engrossed in worldly pleasures for thousands of years.

By the desire of Bhagavān, the Kālīya serpent later moved to that same Yamunā pond with his family, in order to protect himself from the very powerful Garuḍa. This rendered the water in the pond poisonous, and all the fish living here, who had also committed an offence towards Garuḍa, died. In this way, Saubhari Ṛṣi and all the fish that had taken shelter of him faced total destruction, because they had committed an offence towards a *bhakta*. The scriptures therefore declare that one should at all costs refrain from committing Vaiṣṇava *aparādha*.

Kālīya-hrada (Kālīya-daha)

[*Hrada* and *daha* both mean “a deep pool within a river”.] The current name of this place is Kālīya-daha. Śrī Kṛṣṇa subdued the serpent Kālīya here. The *keli-kadamba* tree from which Śrī Kṛṣṇa jumped with great speed into the Kālīya-hrada stands nearby. All of the trees and creepers around the lake were burnt to ashes by the poison of the Kālīya serpent. Only this one *keli-kadamba* tree remained. The mighty and valiant Garuḍa was once carrying a pot of nectar from the heavenly planets in order to free his mother Vinatā from the slavery of his stepmother Kadrū. He rested on this *keli-kadamba* tree for some time, and the strength of the nectar’s fragrance, or a drop of the nectar itself that had spilled, was enough to save this *keli-kadamba* tree.

Kālīyanāga was also very valiant and powerful. When he tied Kṛṣṇa in his coils, Kṛṣṇa became somewhat helpless and motionless. At that time, the Nāgapatnīs (wives of Kālīya), who were great devotees of Kṛṣṇa, prayed, “We would rather be widows than be the wives of a husband opposed to Bhagavān.” But when Kṛṣṇa freed Himself from the serpent’s coils and began to dance on and kick Kālīya’s hoods, Kālīya vomited blood from his thousands of mouths and surrendered unto the Lord. At that time, the Nāgapatnīs folded their hands and begged Kṛṣṇa to spare their husband’s life, considering his surrendered mood. Their prayers pleased Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He granted Kālīyanāga freedom from fear and



Kālīya-brada



Wall-painting at Kāliya-dāba

ordered him to go to Ramaṇaka-dvīpa with his family. He assured Kāliya of His protection, saying, “You need no longer fear Garuḍa. When he sees My footprints on your hoods, he will forget his enmity towards you.”

The Nāgapatnīs prayed as follows: “O Lord, Śrī Lakṣmī-devī gave up all her desires, took a vow and performed austerities for a long, long time just to attain the dust of Your lotus feet. She nonetheless failed to achieve her heart’s desire. Who knows what pious deed Kāliyanāga performed to become qualified to receive that same rare foot dust.”³ The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava commentators on this verse explain this beautifully: The sole reason why Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa bestowed His causeless mercy upon Kāliya was the spontaneous unmotivated devotion that Kāliyanāga’s wives had for Him. The Supreme Lord’s mercy follows and is obedient to the mercy of the devotee.

Śrī Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's bhajana-kuṭī & samādhi

Śrī Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī is the author of *Rādhā-rasa-sudhā-nidhi*, *Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛta*, *Śrī Caitanya-candrāmṛta*, *Saṅgīta-mādhava* and other books on *bhakti*. In his early life, Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī was a resident of Śrī Raṅgam and a devotee of Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. He is the paternal uncle and spiritual master of the famous Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. However, by the mercy of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, he became intoxicated with the *rasa* of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Shortly after Śrīman Mahāprabhu left Śrī Raṅgam, he went to Vṛndāvana to perform *bhajana*. He also lived in Kāmyavana for some time. At the end of his life he entered *samādhi* here in Vṛndāvana while performing *bhajana*. In Kṛṣṇa's pastimes he is Tuṅgavidyā Sakhī.



Śrī Prabodhānanda
Sarasvatī's samādhi
& bhajana-kuṭī



Inside the bhajana-kuṭī & samādhi

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Nowadays, some people say that Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī and the *advaitavādī* Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī of Kāśī are one and the same person. This is completely incorrect in every respect. How is it possible for the same person to first be the devotee Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, then the impersonalist Prakāśānanda and then the same Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī once again? This modern doctrine is an ignorant, mind-boggling speculation, that has been completely refuted by the Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*.

Dvādaśāditya-ṭīlā

It was winter when Kṛṣṇa subdued Kālīya. Kṛṣṇa, who was performing His human-like pastimes (*nara-līlā*), came out of the water, shivering due to cold. He climbed upon a nearby small hill (*ṭīlā*) and basked in the heat of the sun. To serve Kṛṣṇa, the devotee Sūryadeva relieved His shivering by shining forth the full scorching heat of the complete sun in its twelve aspects (*dvādaśa kalā*). This place is therefore known as Dvādaśāditya-ṭīlā.



Dvādaśāditya-ṭīlā

Praskandana-kṣetra

The heat of the sun removed Kṛṣṇa's shivering, but this heat was excessive and Kṛṣṇa started to perspire. The name of this place thus became Praskandana-tīrtha; the word *praskandana* means "with perspiration".

Advaitavaṭa

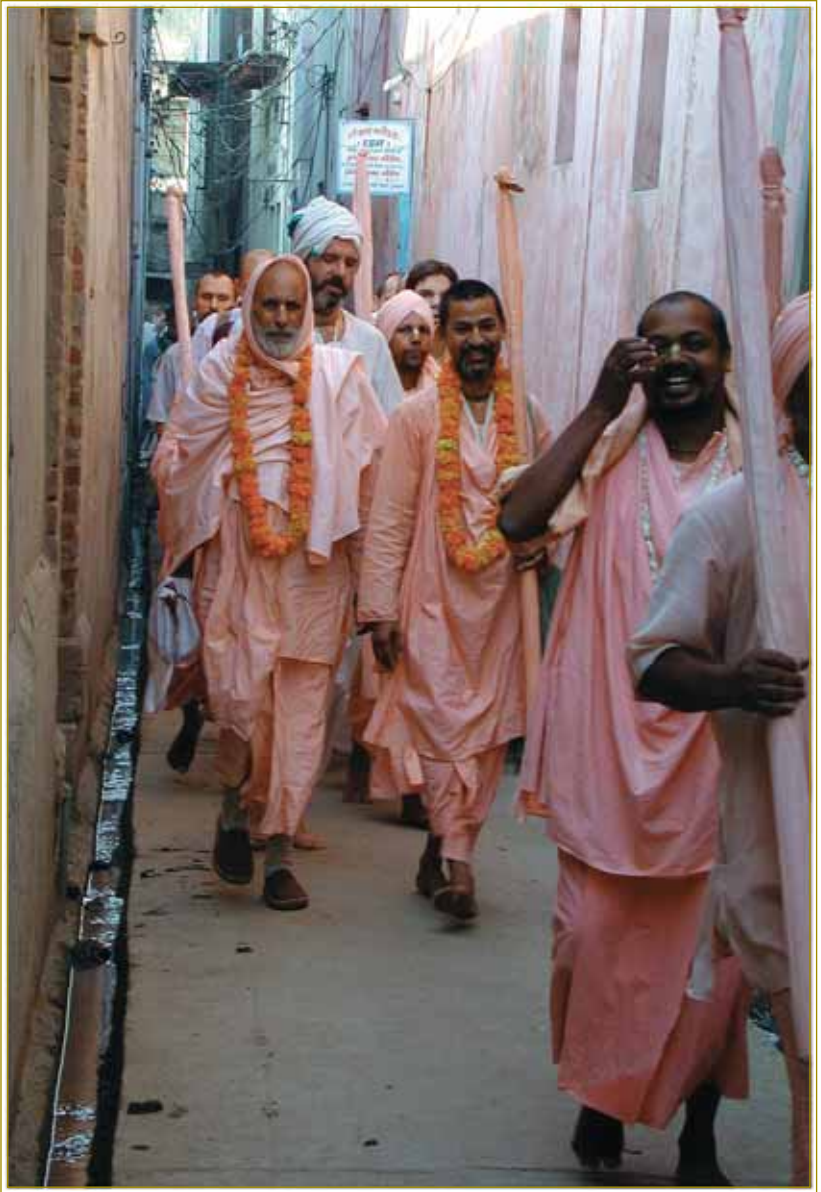
Advaitavaṭa is situated directly in Praskandana-tīrtha. Just before the advent of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Advaita Ācārya came to this place while journeying through Vraja. He resided under this same banyan (*vaṭa*) tree for several days. He had found Śrī Madana-Gopāla in Mahāvana-Gokula, and now served Him here. Due to fear of the Yavanas, and by His desire, He secretly left Śrī Madana-Gopāla with a devoted Caube *brāhmaṇa* and went to Śāntipura, knowing that very soon Śacīnandana Śrī Gaurahari would appear in the town of Nadiyā.

Later, that same Madana-Gopāla made His way to Sanātana Gosvāmī, who had a large temple constructed just nearby and established the deity there. Since then, Śrī Madana-Gopāla became known as Śrī Madana-mohana.

Dāna-galī, Māna-galī, Gumāna-galī & Kuñja-galī

Just near the famous Sevā-kuñja are four narrow *galīs*, or alleys: Dāna-galī, Māna-galī, Gumāna-galī and Kuñja-galī. Once, when Śrīmatī Rādhikā was in *māna*, She made Her way to Māna-sarovara via this very Māna-galī. In the narrow alley named Dāna-galī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* asked the *gopīs* for tax (*dāna*) in the form of *prema*, and the *gopīs* asked the same thing from Kṛṣṇa. This *galī* is therefore known as Dāna-galī. Prema-galī is where Kiśora-Kiśorījī's first meeting took place. At that moment, by the mutual play of Their eyes, a relationship of *prema* was established between Them which increased moment by moment. That is why this *galī* has become known as Prema-galī. Some also call it Gumāna-galī, because when Kṛṣṇa asked Priyājī for tax, She exhibited great pride

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Dāna-gaṭī

(*gumāna*), and refused to give it. The *galī* down which the *sakhīs* would make their way to *Sevā-kuñja*, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa would massage the feet of *svādhīna-bhartṛkā* Śrī Rādhā, is called *Kuñja-galī*. Śrī Dāna-bihārī and Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha are situated at the crossing of these four *galīs*.

Sevā-kuñja

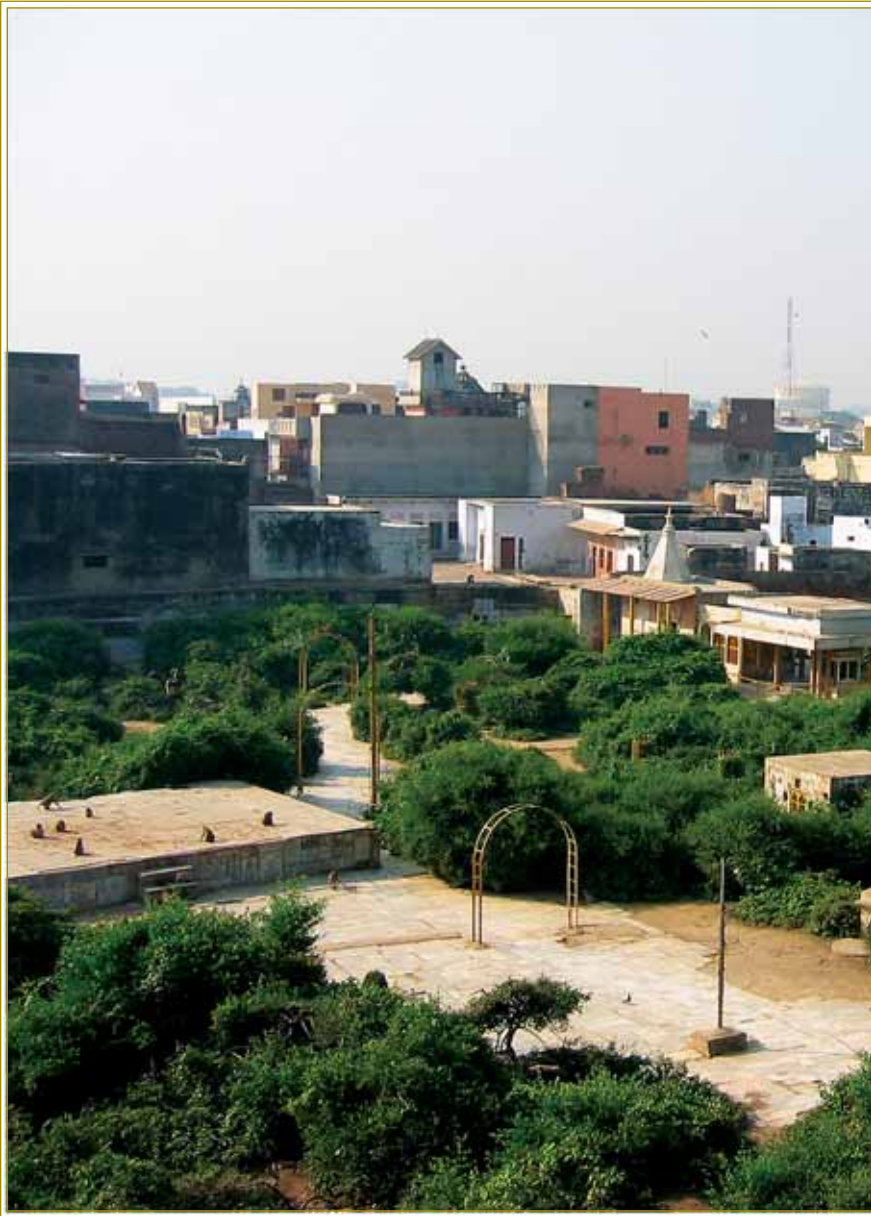
This place is also called *Nikuñjavana*. It lies just near the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara, to the south-west. A painting of Śrīmatī Rādhikā with Śrī Kṛṣṇa massaging Her feet is worshipped here in a small temple.

The *Vrajavāsīs* say that even today Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *Yugala* perform Their pastimes here every night. Everyone therefore leaves this *kuñja* at dusk. Even the impudent monkeys independently leave this *kuñja* as the evening falls. From time to time it happens that someone stubbornly tries to remain here during the night, and in the morning is found dead. Others have by some means escaped death, but have become completely insane.



At *Lalitā-kuṇḍa*

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Sevā-kuñja

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Bhakta Rasakhāna searched for Kṛṣṇa all over Vraja but without success. Finally, he had *darśana* of *rasika* Śrī Kṛṣṇa at this very place. He has revealed this in his beautiful poetry as follows:

*dekhyo duryo vah kuñj kuṭṭr mem
baiṭhyo paloṭat rādhikā pāyan*

“Standing in the doorway of the *kuñja*, I watch Kṛṣṇa as He sits massaging Rādhikā’s feet submissively.” [The word *paloṭa* here indicates that Kṛṣṇa is massaging in the mood, “I will not go to Candrāvalī’s *kuñja* again.”]

In *Sevā-kuñja*, we also find *Lalitā-kuṇḍa*. When *Lalitā* was feeling thirsty during *rāsa*, Kṛṣṇa manifested this beautiful *kuṇḍa*



Lalitā-kuṇḍa

by digging it with His flute. Lalitā and the *sakhīs* drank the *kuṇḍa*'s sweet, cool water and refreshed themselves. There is a *keli-kadamba* tree nearby whose every knot bulges out and resembles a round *śālagrāma*.

Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha (Śrī Vinoda-kuñja)

This *maṭha* lies on Dāna-galī, very close to Śrī Sevā-kuñja, the heart of Śrī Dhāma Vṛndāvana, and has become a famous place for *darśana*.

Prema-puruṣottama Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the ocean of mercy, sent the brothers Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī to Śrī Vṛndāvana to (i) re-establish the lost places of pastimes in Śrī Vṛndāvana, (ii) establish deities, (iii) compose literatures on *bhakti* and (iv) establish *vaiṣṇava-sadācāra*, or proper *vaiṣṇava* behaviour (*smṛti*). By the causeless mercy and



Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha

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encouragement of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī established Śrī Govindadeva and Śrī Madana-mohana, re-discovered lost places of pilgrimage (*tīrthas*), and composed *vaiṣṇava-smṛti* and *bhakti* texts like *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nilamaṇi* and *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.

To keep alive the memory of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, who fulfilled Śrīman Mahāprabhu's inner heart's desire, or *mano'bhīṣṭa*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and the author [Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja] established this *maṭha*. They did this

The deities in the maṭha:

Śrī Vṛndā-devī (left)

*Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu
& Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-
bibārījī (middle)*

*Śrī Śrīmad
Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava
Gosvāmī Mahārāja (right)*



under the inspiration of the founder of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, *nitya-līlā praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and under the direction of the members of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti.

The distinguishing feature of this *maṭha* is the presence of Śrī Vṛndā-devī in one of the three sections (*prakoṣṭhas*) of the altar. In the remaining two sections are Śrī Gaurasundara along with Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārījī and *gurupādapadma* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. At the present time, the only other prominent deity of Śrīmatī Vṛndā-devī can be found in Kāmyavana.



Imlitalā

At the time of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vraja, the ancient *imlī* (tamarind) tree that stood here was enormous. That tree has since disappeared, and a new *imlī* tree stands in its place.

Midway through *rāsa-līlā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa disappeared in order to dispel the other *gopīs*' pride in their good fortune (*saubhāgya-mada*) and to soothe Priyājī's *māna*. He followed Priyājī to Śṛṅgāravaṭa, where He began to decorate Her with flowers. At that time, the other *gopīs*, who were searching for Kṛṣṇa, came closer to the place where Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa were. Śrī Kṛṣṇa requested Priyājī to leave with Him, but She said, "I am unable to walk. You can carry Me on Your shoulders." Kṛṣṇa squatted down, indicating that Priyājī should sit on His shoulders. Just as She went to do this, Kṛṣṇa disappeared again. Now, She also called out in separation, "O Nātha, O Ramaṇa!" and fell down unconscious. The other *gopīs* became very distressed to see Her in this condition.



Imlitalā Temple

Having left Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa began to feel deep separation from Her. Sitting under an *imlī* tree on the bank of the Yamunā, He became so absorbed in thinking of Her that His bodily lustre turned golden like Hers. In connection with this incident, our most worshipful *om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja* has presented a wonderful verse that penetrates the heart:

*rādhā-cintā niveśeṇa yasya kāntir vilopitā
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caraṇam vande rādhāliṅgita vighrahaṁ
Śrī Rādhā-vinoda-bihārī Tattvāṣṭakam (Text 1)*

“I worship the lotus feet of the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that manifests when He is thoroughly immersed in separation from Śrīmatī Rādhikā (who is displaying *māna*, Her mood of jealous anger), or when He is embraced by Śrīmatī Rādhikā (after Her *māna* is broken). At these times, His own dark complexion vanishes and He assumes Her bright, golden lustre.”

The transcendental sentiments that lay within the heart of Śrī Gurupādapadma are profound and full of excellent *siddhānta*. It is the *bhāva* of the *mañjarīs*, the maidservants of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, to feel that Kṛṣṇa should indeed experience great distress when He is separated from Śrīmatī Rādhikā. They become very pleased to see this distress, and arrange Kṛṣṇa’s meeting with Rādhā at that time. This *bhāva* is prominent in Śrī Rūpānuga Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.

While visiting Vraja some five hundred and fifty years ago, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu resided for several days at Akrūra-ghāṭa. Daily, He would come to this very beautiful Imlitalā-ghāṭa on the bank of the Yamunā, where He was immersed in *bhāva* as He chanted the holy names of the Supreme Lord Hari. He bestowed His mercy upon the Rājapūta Kṛṣṇadāsa here.

One day, while Mahāprabhu was staying here, some people requested Him to come to Kālīya-hrada and take *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who they said was again manifesting His pastimes there at

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Smṛitālā

night. Mahāprabhu told them to wait for a few days. Nonetheless, crowds of people began to throng to Kālīya-daha at night. At last, it became evident that the spectacle on the Yamunā was nothing more than some Muslims in a boat catching fish. A light was burning on the bow of the boat. When the fishermen on the bow stood up and moved about, it appeared as if someone was dancing. The boat looked like a serpent, and the burning light like the serpent's jewel. When the facts were revealed, Mahāprabhu said to the people, "Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not manifest such pastimes before the masses of ordinary people of Kali-yuga. Such pastimes appear only in the hearts of pure devotees." Some days later, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Vallabha Bhaṭṭācārya proceeded to Nīlācala via Saurōṅ and Prayāga.

It is said that several years ago someone cut into a branch of the ancient *imlī* tree here and blood oozed from it. The person who severed the branch realised that he had committed an offence and repeatedly prayed for forgiveness. Residents of the *dhāma* believe



Deity of Śrī Caitanya
Mahāprabhu at
Imlītalā

that liberated great souls (*siddha mahātmās*) are still performing *bhajana* in Vṛndāvana in the form of the trees and creepers.

Jhāḍū-maṇḍala

The pastime connected with this place occurred at the time of the famous Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. Śrīla Śyāmānanda, Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura and Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya studied *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the Gosvāmī literatures from the young Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, who gave Śyāmānanda the service of sweeping this ancient place of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.

One day, while he was sweeping in the early hours before dawn, Śyāmānanda found a golden anklet. Previously, Jīva Gosvāmī had instructed him to return any lost object that he might find, directly to its owner, not to anyone else. If any others should try to claim a lost item, he should inform them of Jīva Gosvāmī’s instruction to him. Śyāmānanda therefore very carefully tied the golden anklet in the corner of his upper garment. A short while later, two *vraja-bālās* (young girls) came to him and said, “The anklet you found belongs to our *sakhī*, and we have been looking for it. You can give it to us.”

Śrī Śyāmānanda humbly replied, “Whomever the anklet belongs to should personally come and collect it. I will not give it to you.”

The young girls replied, “Do you feel no shame? How can you dare desire to see the face of this young daughter-in-law?” But Śyāmānanda adhered to his words and did not give them the anklet. The two young girls brought their girlfriend to Śyāmānanda and said, “Tie the anklet around Her foot.” Śrī Śyāmānanda’s hands trembled with *prema* as he tied the anklet around the foot of their friend. These young girls were none other than Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself and Her two *sakhīs*, Lalitā and Viśākhā. Śrīmatī Rādhikā ceaselessly desires to bestow mercy in this way upon Her loving devotees.

By this event, Śyāmānanda’s life became blessed. Previously his name was Duḥkhī-Kṛṣṇa dāsa, but upon receiving the mercy of Śrīmatījī, his name became Śyāmānanda dāsa. Śrīmatī Lalitā



Ihādū-maṇḍala

stamped that anklet on Śyāmānanda's forehead. Even today, those in the spiritual family lineage of Śyāmānanda Prabhu wear a *tilaka* in the shape of the anklet on their forehead.

The following incident also took place here. Once, a long time ago, an old woman lived at Jhādū-maṇḍala, and in her house she had a grindstone. She used this stone to grind wheat for others and in this way carried on her livelihood. She had an unflinching devotion to Kṛṣṇa. As she ground wheat, her beautiful voice sang the sweet names of Kṛṣṇa, while the grindstone made a rumbling *gharr-gharr* sound.

One day, as she was grinding during the early hours before dawn, absorbed in singing the sweet names of Kṛṣṇa, a beautiful dark-complexioned young boy appeared and put one foot on the grindstone. “Maiyā,” He said, “why do you turn the grindstone in such a way that it makes this rumbling *gharr-gharr* sound? I cannot sleep because of it.”

The old lady became a little fearful and said, “My dear son, if I do not work the grindstone, how will I maintain my life?”

The beautiful, dark-complexioned boy replied, “I will put My footprint on your grindstone. People will come to take *darśana* of this footprint and give generous offerings. Their offerings will easily maintain you. Thus, you won't need to use the grindstone anymore.” Saying this, the dark-complexioned boy disappeared.

When morning came, the old lady saw that the boy's footprint had fully appeared on her grindstone. A crowd of people lined up, desirous to take *darśana* of the footprint, and this crowd increased day by day. The old lady was able to maintain herself easily through the donations she received, and she was always absorbed in remembering this pastime of Kṛṣṇa.

Śṛṅgāravāṭa

This place lies a little towards the east from Imlitalā (towards Keśī-ghāṭa) on the bank of the Yamunā. While out grazing the cows, Subala and the other *sakhās* joyfully decorated Kṛṣṇa here with diverse colours and ornaments. In turn, to break Śrīmatī Rādhikā's *māna*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ornamented Her with marvellously imaginative decorations made of flowers that He had personally picked. This is very wonderfully described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

During *rāsa-līlā*, when Śrīmatī Rādhikā saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa dance with other *gopīs* as well as with Her, She left the *rāsa*. Wishing to hide Herself, She sat down in this solitary place. Here, *rasika* Kṛṣṇa decorated Śrīmatījī with *belī*, *camelī* and other flowers that He had personally picked, and thereby pleased Her. When the other *sakhīs* were searching for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one *sakhī* said, "O *sakhīs*, look, look here! Our dear Kṛṣṇa picked flowers for His beloved here, standing on His toes, and therefore the ground is marked with only the front portion of His lotus feet."⁴

Kṛṣṇa was decorating Śrīmatī when He heard the loud voices of the *gopīs* nearby. Kṛṣṇa requested Śrīmatījī to quickly leave



Temple at Śṛṅgāravāṭa

this place with Him, but She refused on the excuse of being tired. Śyāmasundara then crouched down and requested Her to sit on His shoulder, but just as She was about to do so, He disappeared. Distressed in separation, Śrīmatījī fainted, crying out:

*hā nātha ramaṇa preṣṭha kvāsi kvāsi māha-bhuja
dāsyās te kṛpaṇyā me sakhe darśaya sannidhim*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.30.39)

“O master, My lover, O dearest, where are You? Where are You?
Please, O mighty-armed one, O friend, show Yourself to this
wretched maidservant of Yours.”

When the *sakhīs* found Śrīmatī Rādhikā thus overwhelmed in separation, they consoled Her and took Her with them to the bank of the Yamunā.

The following pastime also took place here. While wandering throughout Vraja-maṅḍala, Śrīman Nityānanda Prabhu stayed near Śṛṅgāraṇa for a few days. He was always absorbed in the mood of Śrī Baladeva. Sometimes He would be fully absorbed as an *avadhūta*⁵. Holding on to the necks of the cows, He would cry and ask them, “Have you seen Kanhaiyā? Where is He?” Sometimes He would catch hold of the cowherd men and ask them with tears in His eyes, “Where is Kanhaiyā?” One day He heard an aerial voice announce, “Your Kanhaiyā as Śācinandana Gaurahari in Nadiyā is waiting for You to come to Him.”

Śṛṅgāraṇa is thus also known as Nityānandavaṇa because Nityānanda Prabhu resided here. The presiding deities in the temple are Śrī Nitāi-Gaura and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Just near the temple under an ancient banyan tree is a unique painting in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is decorating Śrīmatī Rādhikā.



*Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa decorating
Śrīmatī Rādhikā*

Cīra-ghāṭa

There is an ancient *kadamba* tree on the bank of the Yamunā where Kṛṣṇa stole the clothes of the young *gopīs* who were bathing here after having completed their Kātyāyanī-vrata. These young, unmarried girls of Vraja were daily bathing in Śrī Yamunā at *brāhma-muhūrta*, the early hours before dawn. They would make a deity of Kātyāyanī (Yogamāyā) out of sand and worship her on the bank of the Yamunā while reciting the following *mantra*:

*kātyāyani mahā-māye mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-goṣa-sutaṁ devi patim me kuru te namaḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.22.4)*

“O goddess Kātyāyanī, O Mahā-māya, O Mahā-yoginī, O mighty controller of all, please make the son of Nanda Mahārāja my husband. I offer my respects unto you.”



Cīra-ghāṭa

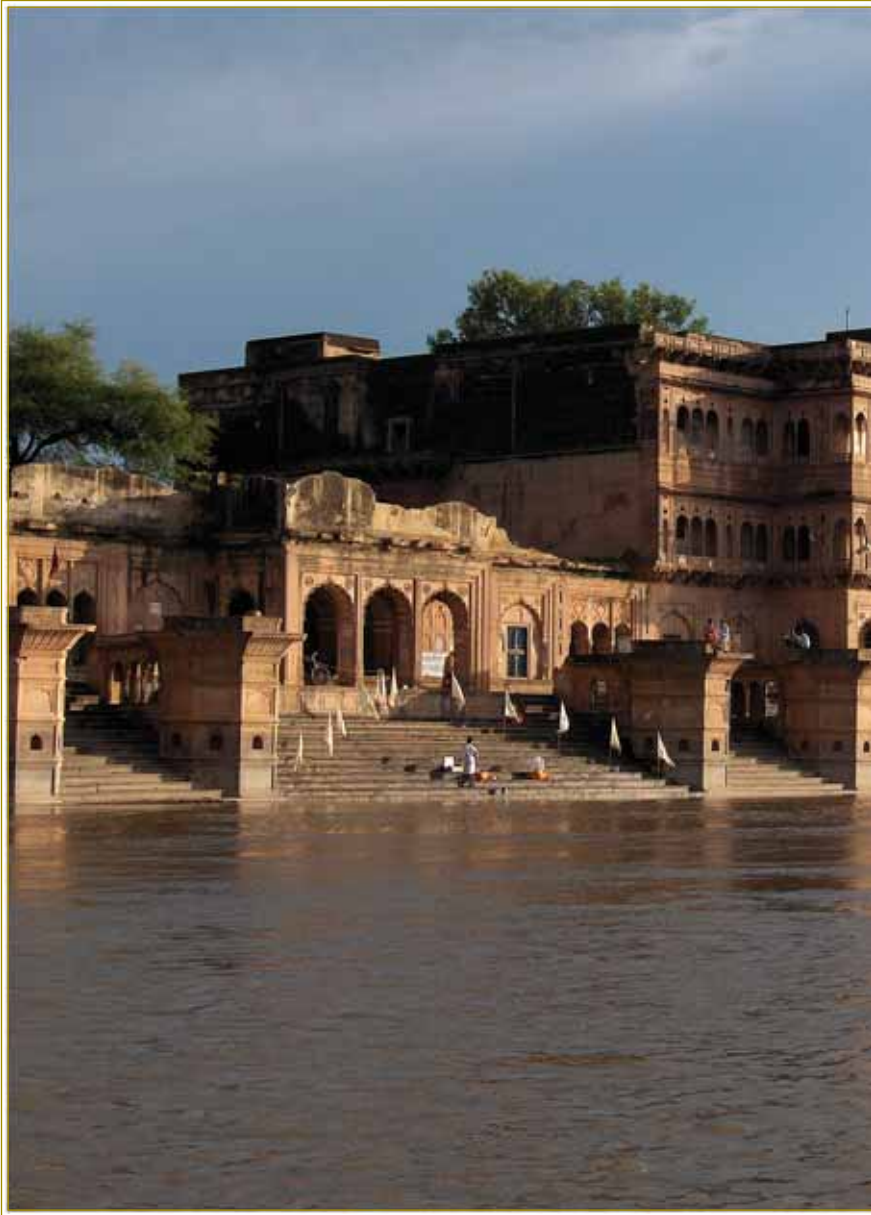
At the end of the *vrata*, Kṛṣṇa Himself arrived there and on the excuse of stealing their clothes bestowed upon them their desired boon: “Your hearts’ desires will be fulfilled on the night of the next Śarada-pūrṇimā.”

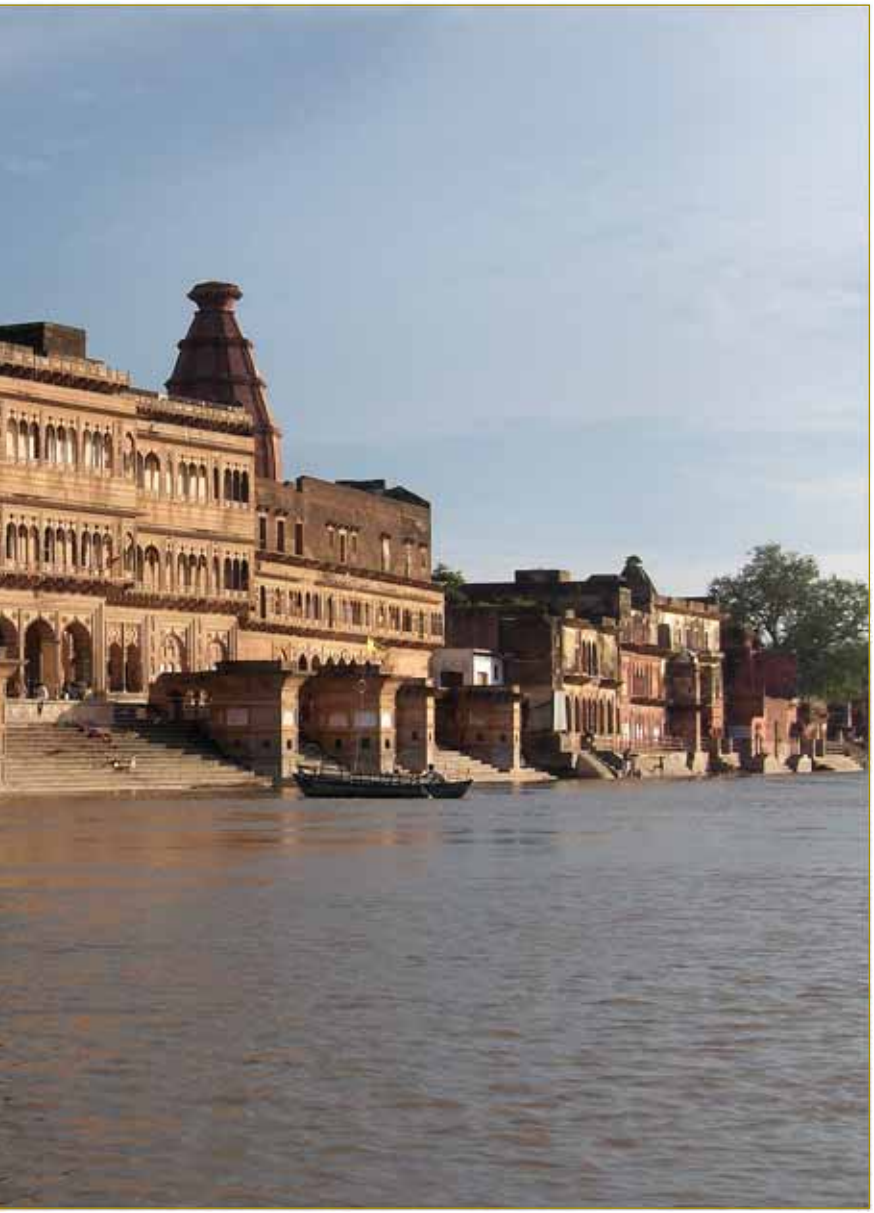
Near Śergarh is another place which is famous as Cīra-ghāṭa. A *kadamba* tree also stands there. There is no doubt that both these places are Cīra-ghāṭa. The same pastime takes place in different eras (*kalpa-bheda*), and therefore it can occur in more than one place.

Keśi-ghāṭa

This place lies a little east of Cīra-ghāṭa on the bank of the Yamunā. Kṛṣṇa killed the Keśi demon here. Once, Kṛṣṇa and His *sakhās* were grazing the cows at this place. Madhumaṅgala joked with Him, “My dear friend, if You give me Your peacock feather, sweet flute and yellow garments, then all the *gopas* and *gopīs* will love me and feed me delicious *laḍḍūs*. Nobody will even ask You if You would like some.” Smiling, Kṛṣṇa personally dressed Madhumaṅgala up in His peacock feather and yellow garments and handed him His flute and staff. Now all dressed up, Madhumaṅgala began to strut about here and there.

At this time, the very powerful Keśi demon assumed the form of a huge horse. Neighing and whinnying, he appeared there to kill Kṛṣṇa. Mahārāja Kaṁsa had instructed him, “Whomever you see wearing a peacock feather on his head and yellow garments on his limbs, and holding a flute in his hand, know that person to be Kṛṣṇa for certain and kill Him.” Upon seeing Madhumaṅgala dressed as Kṛṣṇa, Keśi attacked him with his two hind legs. Kṛṣṇa quickly came to save Madhumaṅgala and killed the Keśi demon. Although the demon’s legs did not so much as touch Madhumaṅgala, he lost consciousness just by the breeze created by the movement of Keśi’s legs. After Kṛṣṇa killed Keśi, however, Madhumaṅgala became embarrassed. He went to Kṛṣṇa and handed back His flute, peacock feather and yellow cloth. He told Him, “I do not want any *laḍḍūs*.”





Kesī-ghāṭa

ŚRĪ VṚJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

My life is worth hundreds of thousands of *laḍḍūs*.” The cowherd boys began to laugh. Even today, the memory of this pastime will enter our hearts by visiting Keśī-ghāṭa.

Nidhuvana

The word *nidhu* means *sūrata-krīḍā*, “amorous pastimes”. *Govinda-lilāmṛta* and other such literature give beautiful descriptions of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s amorous pastimes in Nidhuvana. These books indicate that because in the *keli-kuñjas* of Nidhuvana the playful, amorous night (*niśa*) pastimes take place; so the pastime of sleeping (*śayana-vilāsa*) at the end of the night (*niśānta*) also takes place here. Seeing dawn approaching, Vṛndā-devī becomes alarmed and orders the male and female parrots, peacocks, cuckoos, bumblebees and so forth to make their sweet humming and other sounds to wake up Kiśora and Kiśorī. The *rāgānuga bhaktas*, and especially the eminent *rūpānuga rasika bhaktas*, relish this *niśānta-līlā* in their hearts while chanting the holy names of the Supreme



Nidhuvana

Lord. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura gives an elegant description of this pastime in his *Svapna-vilāsa*.

Once, at the end of the night, while the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa were sleeping in a *keli-kuñja* of Nidhuvana, Śrī Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī had an amazing dream. Upon waking, She woke Her Prāṇa-vallabha and said, “Beloved, I just had an amazing dream. In that dream I saw an incomparable river, just like the Yamunā. Along that river I saw a supremely charming bank, just like a bank of the Yamunā. On that bank, which resembled a grove in Vṛndāvana, I saw a wonderful golden-complexioned young man singing and dancing very beautifully. Being absorbed in an internal mood, He was carried away in dancing to the rhythm of the *mṛdaṅga* and *kartālas*. That golden youth was crying and uttering ‘O Kṛṣṇa, O Kṛṣṇa!’ and sometimes He would utter, ‘O Rādhā, O Rādhā, where are You?’ Sometimes He rolled on the ground, and sometimes He became unconscious. He freely distributed these sentiments of His to the living entities of the entire universe, from a blade of grass to Lord Brahmā.

“My beloved, upon seeing Him, I began to think, ‘Who is this golden-complexioned youth? Am I that golden youth who is constantly crying and uttering “O Kṛṣṇa, O Kṛṣṇa”? And is the golden-complexioned youth crying out in a loud voice “O Rādhā, O Rādhā, where are You?” no one else but You, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the most beloved of My life?’”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “O My beloved, at different times I have given You *darśana* of Nārāyaṇa and some of My other forms, yet You were never astonished. Who this golden-complexioned youth is who is bewildering Your mind I cannot say.” Speaking in this way, He began to smile.

Rādhikā replied, “Prāṇa-vallabha, now I understand that this golden form is no one but You. No one other than You is able to infatuate Me in this way.” Kṛṣṇa then showed Śrī Rādhikā Her dream in His Kaustubha jewel, just as She had seen it. Śrīmatī Rādhikā said, “In Your childhood, the all-knowing Garga Ṛṣi

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The main entrance to Nidhuvana

informed Nanda Bābā that in the beginning of the forthcoming Kali-yuga, his son will appear as the golden-complexioned Gaurāṅga. A prediction by Garga Ṛṣi can never be false. Therefore, My dream must be true, and the golden youth I saw in the dream must, in fact, be You.”

Hearing this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “Prāṇeśvarī, I will assume Your golden complexion and the sentiments of Your inner heart to appear in the form of Gaurāṅga. I will thus personally relish Your nectarean *bhāvas*. At the same time, I will preach *rāga-mārga bhakti* through the chanting of the holy name of Hari. In fact, I will appear in the form of the most merciful Gaurāṅga just to distribute divine love for Me, which is rarely attained. You will also appear on earth with Me as My associate.” Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa thus gave an indication in this pastime of the future appearance of Śrī Gaura.

In Nidhuvana, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, decorated in regal apparel, sat on a royal throne in a *kuñja*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, dressed as a police officer, protected the entrance of the *kuñja* and the area within it. This pastime is called *rāi-rāja-līlā*. The poets in the Gauḍīya line have given delightful descriptions of this pastime.

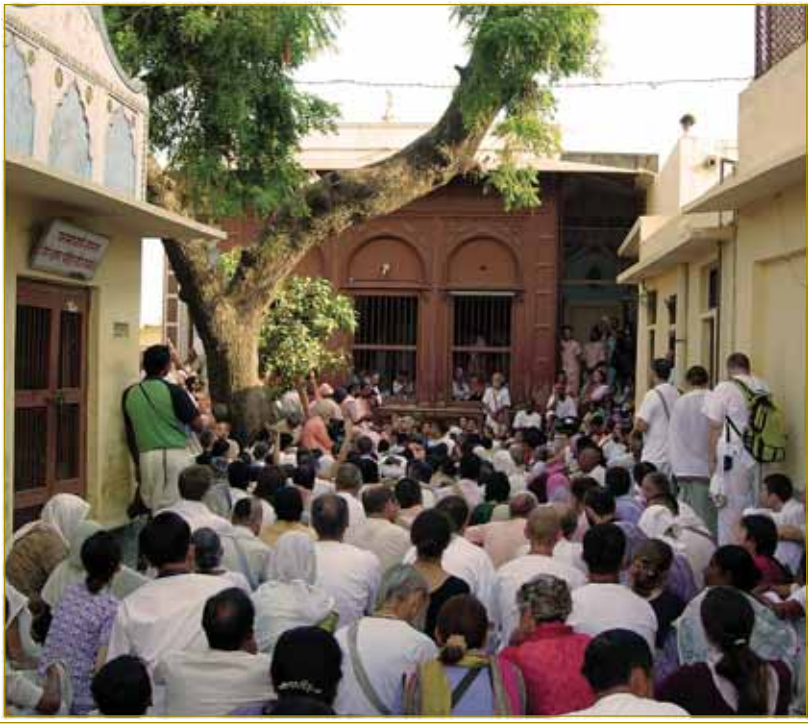
Viśākhā-kuṇḍa lies in Nidhuvana, just as Lalitā-kuṇḍa lies in Sevā-kuñja. Śrī Rādhā-bihārījī manifested this *kuṇḍa* of sweet, delicious water with His flute to relieve the thirst of His beloved *sakhī* Viśākhā as well as that of the other *sakhīs*. Later, the famous Svāmī Haridāsa, who was very skilled in devotional music, found the deity of Śrī Bānke-bihārī in this same Viśākhā-kuṇḍa.

Svāmī Haridāsajī used to please Śrī Bihārījī by sweetly singing devotional songs he had personally composed as he played the *vīṇā*. While singing, he would become so absorbed that he would forget his body and mind. The famous Baijubāvara and Tānsena were his disciples. Upon hearing about Svāmī Haridāsa’s glories from the mouth of Tānsena, who was the jewel among Emperor Akbara’s ministers, Akbara himself desired to relish the nectar of Haridāsa’s musical talent. But Svāmī Haridāsa had firmly resolved not to entertain anyone but his deity.



Viśākhā-kuṇḍa

Therefore one day Emperor Akbara disguised himself as an ordinary man and, along with Tānsena, came to Svāmī Haridāsa's hut in Nidhuvana. Tānsena, who also was very expert in music, had purposely brought his *vīṇā* along and now began to sing a sweet song. His singing enchanted Akbara. Svāmī Haridāsa then took the *vīṇā* from the hands of Tānsena and began to sing the same song, pointing out the errors that Tānsena had made in singing it. Svāmī Haridāsa's singing was so sweet and attractive that even the deer, birds and other animals of the forest came to that spot, where they listened silently. Emperor Akbara's amazement knew no bounds. He was so pleased that he immediately wanted to present something to Svāmī Haridāsa, but the wise Tānsena indicated to the emperor not to do so as it would alter Haridāsa's mood. The *samādhi* of this great personality is still present in Nidhuvana.



The temple at Dhīra-samīra

Dhīra-samīra

This place is situated on the bank of Śrī Yamunā just near Vam̐śivaṭa. It is the place of *rāsa-līlā*, where the Divine Couple perform Their eternal, sportive pastimes in the *nikuñjas*. The breeze (*samīra*) itself would become so gentle and calm (*dhīra*) here upon beholding these pastimes that it would be unable to move even an inch. Therefore, this place is named as Dhīra-samīra.

Śrī Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita established the *kuñja* and temple at Dhīra-samīra. He was the younger brother of Sūryadāsa Sarkhela, who was Nityānanda Prabhu's father-in-law, the father of Jāhnava and Vasudhā. Śrī Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita is one of the main associates of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. He came to Vṛndāvana at the end of his life, where he established Dhīra-samīra-kuñja and began to serve and



Śrī Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita's
samādhi

worship Śrī Śyāmarāya, his worshipful deity. His place of *bhajana* and his *samādhi* are also here.

In his well-known song from *Gīta-govinda* the famous Vaiṣṇava poet Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī has mentioned this *kuñja*:

*dhīra-samīre yamunā-tīre vasati vane vana-mālī
goṇī-pīna payodhara-mardana cañcala-kara-yuga-sālī*

The *kuñja* that is mentioned here refers to this Dhīra-samīra-*kuñja*.

• Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī's place of *bhajana*

Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī's place of *bhajana* is situated within Dhīra-samīra. Śrī Vakreśvara Paṇḍita was one of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's well-known associates. In his last days, he became so distressed in separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa that in the eyes of worldly people he left his material body. Some time later his

dear disciple Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī also left this material world. His beloved disciple Dhyānacanda Gosvāmī was also a most learned and a topmost *rasika bhakta*. During his time, government officials committed some atrocities against the Rādhā-Kānta Maṭha and the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Haridāsa Ṭhākura in Purī. This caused him great sorrow. At that time, a Vaiṣṇava from Vṛndāvana gave him the following news: “Why are you so worried? We have seen your *gurudeva*, Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī, performing *bhajana* at Dhīra-samīra. Go to him. He will settle everything.” Hearing this, Dhyānacanda Gosvāmī became very joyful and immediately travelled on foot to Vṛndāvana.

Dhyānacanda Gosvāmī reached Vṛndāvana within a few days and upon entering Dhīra-samīra, he became astonished to see Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī with chanting-beads in his hand, submerged in ecstasy as he chanted *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. A constant flow of tears streamed from his eyes as he remembered various pastimes. Śrī Dhyānacanda fell at his feet like a rod and began to cry. He begged him to return to Purī-dhāma. Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī refused to go in person but said, “Return to Purī without anxiety. The disturbance of the government officials will end forever.” By his order, Dhyānacanda Gosvāmī returned to the Rādhā-Kānta Maṭha in Purī, where the government officials repeatedly apologised to him for their deeds.

This is that same Dhīra-samīra where Śrī Dhyānacanda Gosvāmī had direct *darśana* of Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī’s unmanifest transcendental form. Dhīra-samīra gives transcendental bliss to the devotees. Even today, it treasures all these pastimes in its heart.

- **The place where jealous anger was broken**
(Māna-bhañjana-sthala)

Māna-bhañjana-sthala lies within Dhīra-samīra. In the book *Vraja Parikramā*, it is said that the sweet *māna-bhañjana līlā* (*māna* means “jealous anger” and *bhañjana* means “breaking”)

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which Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī describes in *Gīta-govinda* (Song 19, verse 7) in his famous verse *smara-garala-khaṇḍanam mama śirasi maṇḍanam dehi pada-pallavam udāram* took place here.

Vamśīvaṭa

This is the place where the Youthful Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa together with the *sakhīs* performed their pastimes of *rāsa* as described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the pure and faultless scriptural authority. To bestow the result of the Kātyāyanī-pūjā upon the young, unmarried *gopīs*, *rasika-bihārī* Śrī Kṛṣṇa granted them a boon. To fulfil this boon, He played a sweet tune on His flute on a full moon night. Hearing the wonderful flute-song, the *gopīs*, intoxicated in *prema*, came here. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.29.4) describes this as follows:

*niśamya gītām tad anaṅga-varadhanam
vraja-striyaḥ kṛṣṇa-grhīta-mānasāḥ
ājagmur anyonyam alakṣitodyamāḥ
sa yatra kānto java-lola-kuṇḍalāḥ*

“The young women of Vraja heard the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute. This sound, which reinforces amorous feelings, captivated their minds. Each unknown to the other, they went to where their lover Kṛṣṇa waited. Because they moved so quickly their earrings swung back and forth.”

On the pretext of correcting the *gopīs* transgression of righteous conduct, *rasikendra-śekhara* Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave His surrendered *gopīs* many reasons why they should return home to serve their husbands, but the clever *gopīs* easily refuted all His arguments.

Kṛṣṇa’s autumnal *rāsa* (*śāradīya-rāsa*) with countless *gopīs* took place here. One Kṛṣṇa danced between two *gopīs* or one *gopī* was dancing between two Kṛṣṇas. In this way, *rāsa* took place with astonishing dancing and singing. The other *gopīs* became proud of their good fortune (*saubhāgya-mada*) and Śrīmatī



Vāṁśīvaṭa

Rādhikā entered into a sulky angry mood, *māna*. Seeing this, *rasika-śekhara* Śrī Kṛṣṇa disappeared from that place in order to soothe Śrīmatī Rādhikā's *māna* and to remove the pride of the other *gopīs*.

Thereafter, the *gopīs*, suffering separation from Kṛṣṇa and crying loudly, began to sing, *jayati te 'dhikam janmanā vrajaḥ...*⁶ Hearing their singing, Śrī Kṛṣṇa again appeared, and at this place He expressed His gratitude to the *gopīs* in sweet words: "You have performed an extraordinary deed: you have given up everything for Me. For this sacrifice, I am eternally indebted to you and can never repay you."⁷ This is the place where *rāsa-līlā* was performed, and thus it is the crest jewel among all places of pastimes.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson Śrī Vajranābha Mahārāja planted a tree here in remembrance of this place of *rāsa*, but after some time the Yamunā flooded that place. More recently, five hundred and fifty years ago, Śrī Mādhu Paṇḍita, a disciple of Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita, took one of its branches and planted it here, and that branch transformed into a vast tree. Śrī Mādhu Paṇḍita found the deity Śrī Gopinātha here while engaged in *bhajana*. There are four very small temples in each of the four corners of the quadrangular wall of Vamśīvaṭa. The deities of Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī and Śrī Nimbārkācārya were established within them. Nowadays, some other deities have replaced them. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas used to serve here, but then Brahmācārījī, the spiritual guide of a king of Gvāliyor, bought this place. Since then, it has been in the care of the Nimbārka *sampradāya*.

Gopīśvara Mahādeva

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Mahādeva Śāṅkara, the god of gods, has been called the foremost Vaiṣṇava. He and Bhagavatī Pārvatī are always absorbed in meditation on Kṛṣṇa's eternal eightfold daily pastimes (*aṣṭa-kālīya līlā*). Once, during Śrī Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes, Śāṅkara desired to take *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa's captivating *rāsa-līlā* with his own eyes. Being eager to do so, he came directly

to Vṛndāvana from Kailāśa. At the gate outside Vṛndāvana, some attendant *gopīs* stopped him, because no male except for Śrī Kṛṣṇa can enter the *rāsa*. But since when has Śaṅkara easily agreed to anything? He asked the attendant *gopīs* how he might be admitted, and they told him to satisfy Bhagavatī Yogamāyā Paurṇamāsī (Pūrṇimā) with his worship.

Śaṅkara followed their advice and after arduous worship he received *darśana* of Yogamāyā. Knowing the desire of Śaṅkara, Pūrṇimā took his hands and dipped him in the nearby Brahma-kuṇḍa. When he came out of the pond, he had been transformed into an extremely beautiful young *gopī*. Pūrṇimā seated Śaṅkara, now a *gopī*, inside a *kuñja* north-east of the *rāsa-sthalī*. She told him to behold the *rāsa-līlā* from there, and then she disappeared.

After a short while, the *rāsa-līlā* began. The *gopīs* thought, “Today, for some reason or other, we are not feeling any happiness in singing and dancing.” They understood that some outsider had entered the arena, and they began to search for that person. In their search they came to this place, where they saw a new, unknown *gopī* sitting in a *kuñja*. They caught that new *gopī* and began to question her, “What is your name? What is the name of your village? Who is your husband? Who is your father-in-law?” But the new *gopī* was unable to answer any of their questions. Instead, she could only cry. Yogamāyā had neither arranged her birth from the womb of a *gopī*, nor given her any name. The new *gopī* was not married to any *gopa* either, so what answers could she give? When the *gopīs* received no answer, they began to slap her cheeks till they became swollen. Seeing Mahādeva’s misery, Pūrṇimā’s heart melted. She went there and explained that this *gopī* was an object of her mercy. She requested the *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa to be merciful to her. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, knowing the internal desire of Pūrṇimā, gave Śaṅkara the name Gopīśvara and granted him the boon that a *sādhaka* would be unable to enter Vṛndāvana, and especially into Kṛṣṇa’s sweet pastimes there, without first receiving his mercy.

The Gosvāmī literatures also describe that at the time of Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes, the *gopīs* worshipped Gopīśvara Mahādeva with the desire to obtain service to Kṛṣṇa. For instance, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's *Śrī Vraja-vilāsa-stava* (verse 87) states:

*mudā gopendrasyātmaja-bhuja-pariṣvaṅga-nidhaye
sphurada-gopī-vṛndairyamaiha bhagavantaṁ praṇayibhiḥ
bhajadbhisa tair bhaktyā svama bhilaṣitaṁ prāptuma cirād
yamī-tīre gopīśvaramanudinaṁ taṁ kila bhaje*

“To obtain the jewel of being embraced by the arms of Vrajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara, the *gopīs*, who possess firm, loving, intimate attachment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, joyfully worshipped Sadāśiva with great devotion and had all their internal desires fulfilled without delay. Daily I worship that Gopīśvara Mahādeva who resides on the bank of the Yamunā.”

The *praṇāma-mantra* (from Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's *Sanikalpa-kalpa-druma*, text 103) for Gopīśvara Mahādeva clearly indicates that Gopīśvara Mahādeva is the bestower of unadulterated *kṛṣṇa-prema*:

*vṛndāvanāvani-pate! jaya soma! soma-maule
sanaka-sanandana-sanātana-naradeḍya
gopīśvara! vraja-vilāsī-yugāṅghri-padme
prema prayaccha nirupādhi namo namste*

“O gatekeeper of Vṛndāvana, O Soma, all glories to you. O you whose forehead is decorated with the moon, and who is worshipful for the sages headed by Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana and Nārada. O Gopīśvara, desiring that you bestow upon me *prema* for the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, who perform joyous pastimes in Vraja-dhāma, I offer obeisances unto you time and again.”



Special darśana of Gopīśvara Mahādeva

Jñāna-gudaḍi

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa returned to Mathurā from *gurukula*, He sent His dear Uddhava to Nanda-Gokula to console His parents and the *gopīs*. What consolation could Uddhava actually give to the tormented hearts of Nanda Bābā, Yaśodā-maiyā and the *gopīs* that would relieve them from the fire of separation? Kṛṣṇa sent Uddhava on the excuse of consoling the Vrajavāsīs, but the hidden truth is that there was no one in Mathurā who could console Kṛṣṇa, who was scorching in separation from the *gopīs*. What to speak of console Kṛṣṇa, who in Mathurā could even understand His sentiments? Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa sent His dear Uddhava to that school where He Himself had learned lessons on *prema* – Vraja. Kṛṣṇa considered Uddhava a qualified student for such lessons. In that school, the principal was Rādhārānī, the embodiment of *mahābhāva*; and Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs* were the teachers.

Being an ocean of mercy, the *gopīs* allowed into their school this student that Kṛṣṇa had sent them. Uddhava delivered to the *gopīs* Kṛṣṇa's message, which was full of knowledge of the Absolute Truth (*tattva-jñāna*). But they tore it up so that it resembled a tattered garment (*gudaḍi*) and threw it into the water of the Yamunā. That *jñāna-gudaḍi* drifted downstream and fell into the Gaṅgā at Prayāga. From there it floated to the salt ocean where it was lost forever. The place where the *gopīs* abandoned that message filled with *tattva-jñāna*, leaving it to float down the Yamunā like a torn garment, is known today as Jñāna-gudaḍi.

Brahma-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* lies a little towards the south-west of Jñāna-gudaḍi. Bhagavatī Yogamāyā Paurṇamāsī gave Mahādeva Śaṅkara the form of a *gopī* by dipping him in this *kuṇḍa*. Śrī Vṛndā-devī also gave Nārada the form of Nāradi Gopī by bathing him here, thus fulfilling his desire to take *darśana* of *mahā-rāsa*, which is very difficult to obtain.



Brahma-kunḍa

There is an *aśoka* tree on the northern side of this Brahma-kunḍa which blossoms with flowers at exactly noontime on the Dvādaśī of Vaiśākha-śuklā. Only extremely fortunate *rasika bhaktas*, however, can behold those flowers – no one else. This is stated in *Varāha Purāṇa*.⁸

Veṇu-kūpa

While engaged in sportive pastimes in Vṛndāvana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa knew that His beloveds were thirsty, so He touched His flute (*veṇu*) to the earth and blew into it. A stream of water which pierced Pātāla, the lower regions, emerged by the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. The water was very cool and fragrant. The *gopīs* drank this water, praising Kṛṣṇa and His flute. The *gopīs* named this well Veṇu-kūpa.

Dāvānala-kunḍa

On the day Kālīyanāga was subdued, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and the *gopas* and *gopīs* could not return to their residences in



Dāvānala-kuṇḍa

Chattīkarā as night had already fallen. They moved away from the poisonous Kāliya-daha to a lake a little distance away to the east. The water of this lake was clean and sweet, and after drinking water they rested here. Seeing a good opportunity to kill Kṛṣṇa and His associates, the servants of the wicked Kāmsa set this forest ablaze in all directions. Very soon, a devastating fire raged throughout the forest. Kṛṣṇa told everyone to close his eyes. He also closed His eyes, and at once swallowed that devastating forest fire as if it were cool water. The pond where this pastime took place is called Dāvānala-kuṇḍa. *Dāvānala* means “forest fire”.

THE TEMPLES OF ŚRĪ VṚNDĀVANA

There are currently thousands of temples in Vṛndāvana, and therefore Vṛndāvana is also known as “The City of Temples”. There is a temple in every home. The following temples are some of the principal ancient ones: Śrī Govinda, Śrī Sākṣī-gopāla, Śrī Gopīnātha, Śrī Madana-mohana, Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa, Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda, Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara, Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda, Śrī Gaura-Nitāi at Śṛṅgāravaṭa, Śrī Sītānātha, Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha and Śrī Bāṅkebihārī.

There are also many modern temples, like the temples of Śāhajī, Lālā Bābū, Śrī Raṅgajī, Taḍāsa, Jaipura, Hāḍābāḍī-kuñja, Śrījī, Varddhmāna Rāja, Brahmācārījī, Giridhārījī, Ṭīkārī Rānī, Śāhājāpura, Mahārānī Svarṇamayī, Kālābābū-kuñja, Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma and many others. To keep this book short, most of these have not been mentioned in any detail. A short description of some of the prominent temples is now given below.

Śrī Govindadeva Temple (Śrī Govinda Svāmī-tīrtha)

The present name of this temple is Śrī Govindadeva, and its ancient name was Gomā-ṭilā. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī used to perform *sādhana-bhajana* in a small hut behind the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara in Sevā-kuñja. On the order of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, he composed different literatures on *bhakti*, like *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nilamaṇi*, while living here. Also, following the instruction of Mahāprabhu, he wanted to manifest the deity of Śrī Govinda that had previously been installed by Śrī Vajranābha.

Daily, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī would perform the ten miles *parikramā* of Vṛndāvana. One day, during his *parikramā*, he became very restless thinking about the deity of Śrī Govinda. He sat down under a tree on the bank of the Yamunā and wept, yearning for His *darśana*. At that time, a beautiful Vrajavāsī boy who was also

doing *parikramā* walked past. He saw Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī weeping under the tree, and asked him why he was crying. At first, Rūpa Gosvāmī said nothing, but when the boy persisted, he revealed to Him the pain in his heart. The Vrajavāsī boy brought Rūpa Gosvāmī to Gomā-ṭilā and said, “Please listen. Every day, just before noon, one cow comes to this mound, and irrigates this place with the milk from her udder. I think that your desire will be fulfilled here.” Saying this, the boy immediately disappeared.

Thinking of the beauty and sweet words of the boy, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī fainted. Upon regaining consciousness, he called the neighbouring Vrajavāsīs, who very carefully dug up the earth at that place. There, a little under the ground, was Śrī Govindajī, more beautiful than millions of cupids. They bathed the deity with great ceremony. News of this spread quickly, and crowds of people gathered to take *darśana* of Śrī Govindajī.

Śrī Govindadeva is Vṛndāveśvara – the Lord (*īśvara*) of Śrī Vṛndāvana. In the *Skanda*, *Padma*, *Varāha* and other Purāṇas, He is said to be Vṛndāvana’s *rāja-rājeśvara*, King of kings. Śrī Govindadeva is thus the worshipful deity of Vṛndāvana. Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 8.50–1) states:

*vṛndāvane kalpa-drume suvarṇa-sadana
mahā-yogaṇḍītha tāhān ratna-simhāsana
tāte vasi 'āche sadā vrajendra-nandana
'śrī-govinda deva' nāma-sākṣāt madana*

“At the *mahā-yogaṇḍītha* in Vṛndāvana, beneath a desire tree is a golden throne bedecked with jewels. On that throne Vrajendra-nandana, Śrī Govindadeva, the transcendental Cupid, is seated.”

Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 1.16) also says:

*dīvyad-vṛndāranya-kalpa-drumādhah
śrīmad-ratnāgāra-simhāsana-sthau*

śrī-śrī-rādhā-śrīla-govinda-devau
preṣṭhālibhiḥ sevya-mānau smarāmi

“I meditate upon Śrī Rādhā-Govindadeva, who are seated beneath a desire tree on an effulgent bejewelled throne in the supremely beautiful land of Vṛndāvana. There, They are always being served by Their beloved *sakhīs*, especially by Lalitā and Viśākhā.”

There are many famous statements regarding Śrī Govinda in different scriptures. For instance, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (6.8.20) states: “*mām keśavo gadayā prātar avyād govinda āsaṅgavam ātavenuh* – May Śrī Keśava protect me with His club in the morning hours, and may Śrī Govinda, who is holding His flute, protect me in the second portion of the day.” A commentary on this verse nicely elucidates its meaning.⁹ In the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* (Pūrva-khaṇḍa text 38) it is said: “*tam ekaṁ govindaṁ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaṁ* – You are Govinda and Your form is transcendental, full of knowledge, bliss and eternality.”

The Vedas (*Urddhva-āmnāya*) glorifies Śrī Govinda in the following verse:

*gopāla eva govindaḥ prakatāprakataḥ sadā
vṛndāvane yogapiṭhe sa eva satataṁ sthitaḥ
asau yuga-catuṣke 'pi śrīmad-vṛndāvanādhipaḥ
pūjito nanda-gopādyaiḥ kṛṣṇenāpi supūjitaḥ*

The Atharva Veda says, *gokulāraṇye mathurā-maṇḍale vṛndāvana-madhye sahasra-dala-madhye 'ṣṭadala-keśare govindo'pi śyāmaḥ dvibhujo*, and so on. Furthermore, the *Skanda Purāṇa* states:

*govinda-svāmi nāmātra vasatyarccayatmiko 'cyutaḥ
gandharvair apsarobhiṣca kṛiḍa mānaḥ sa modate*

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī also mentions Śrī Govinda in the following verse from *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa* (10.76):

ŚRĪ VṚJĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

*vṛndā-devī sametāya govindāya namo namaḥ
loka-kalmaṣa-nāśāya paramātma-svarūpiṇe*

“I pay my respect to Śrī Govinda together with Vṛndā-devī. He is the personification of the Supersoul and the destroyer of the sins of mankind.”

Before Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī’s arrival in Śrī Dhāma Vṛndāvana, it was unheard of to place a deity of Śrīmatī Rādhikā beside a deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It so happened that a deity of Śrī Rādhikā, who was present in the temple of Jagannātha in Purī-dhāma at a place named Cakrabeḍa, was being worshipped by everyone as Lakṣmījī. Śrīmatī Rādhikā instructed the father of Mahārāja Pratāparudra, Puruṣottama Jānā, in a dream: “I am not Lakṣmī; I am Rādhā, the beloved of Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I am waiting for the manifestation of Śrī Govindadeva in Vṛndāvana. When He appears please send Me to Him with great care.” This deity, along with other deities of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, was later sent to Vṛndāvana with Śrī Jāhnavā Ṭhākūrānī, and the contemporary *govāmīs* placed this deity of Śrī Rādhā to the left of Śrī Govindadeva. After being united with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Śrī Govinda became famous by the name of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally sent His own deity form, Śrī Gaura-Govinda, to Vṛndāvana, with His associate Kāśīśvara Brahmācārī. That same deity is nearby, in the southern part of the Govindajī Temple.

In 1590 AD, a disciple of Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Mahārāja Māna Singh of Jaipura, built an extensive seven-storey, red-stone temple, as inspired by his holy master. In 1670 AD, the tyrannical Mughal emperor Aurangzeb demolished this temple, destroying the top four floors. When he was in the process of destroying the lower part, he suddenly received some news of some calamity and had to return to Delhi. Thus, the lower portion of the temple was saved. Before the temples of Vṛndāvana were destroyed, Śrī Govindajī and other worshipful deities of the



The old Govindadeva Temple

Gauḍīyas were sent to Jaipura. In 1748 AD, the *pratibhū-vigraha* of Śrī Govindadeva was installed nearby here. Then, in 1819 AD, Śrī Nandakumāra Vasu constructed the present temple. Situated in this temple is Śrī Govindadeva with Śrī Rādhikā to His left. The ancient and original Govindadeva along with His beloved Rādhikā now reside in a temple near the royal palace in Jaipura.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MĀṄḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



The original Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, now in Jaipur



The new Govindadeva Temple

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī jokingly forbids the *darśana* of Govindadeva with the following words: “If you have even a slight desire to enjoy life with your wife, sons, relatives and friends, then listen to my advice. Never go to Keśi-ghāṭa in Vṛndāvana, even by mistake. There, Śrī Hari as the deity of Govinda is standing in His charming threefold-bending form, smiling. Raising His eyebrows, He looks here and there with slightly crooked eyes. His yellow cloth (*pīṭāmbara*) is shimmering on His body, and He is decorated with a heart-stealing garland of forest flowers and bunches of fresh young leaves. Aah, the flute, the root cause of all troubles, is gracefully placed to His lips, and the peacock feather on His head is increasing His beauty. A person who even once beholds this deity of Govinda with his own eyes never returns to his home, and his household life is ruined. Therefore, O wordly *jīva*, be cautious. Never ever go towards Keśi-ghāṭa; otherwise an unthinkable disaster may occur.”¹⁰

Śrī Madana-mohana

Mahārāja Vajranābha installed the three deities of Śrī Govinda, Śrī Gopinātha and Śrī Madana-mohana in Śrī Dhāma Vṛndāvana. In time, due to the oppression of the barbarians, the priests hid these deities in various places and fled. Vṛndāvana turned into a dense forest. It has already been described how Śrī Govindadeva re-appeared after many years by the endeavours of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. Now, we will briefly describe how Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī manifested Śrī Madana-mohana.

Sometimes in the morning, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī walked the sixteen miles from Vṛndāvana to Govardhana to perform the fourteen-mile long *parikramā* of Govardhana. From there, he would walk another sixteen miles to Mathurā to collect alms (*mādhukarī*) and then again walk back to his *bhajana-kuṭī* in Vṛndāvana. One day, he came to the house of a Caube *brāhmaṇa* in Mathurā for alms. What did he see there? In the house of the Caube, two beautiful boys were playing the game *gullī-ḍaṇḍā*. Madana, the

restless, fidgety boy with a dark-bluish complexion defeated the son of the Caube. Madana climbed upon the shoulders of the defeated boy and enjoyed a 'horse ride'. But when the Caube's son defeated Madana the second time they played, and it was his turn to enjoy a ride on Madana's shoulders, Madana ran into the temple room. Seeing this, the son of the Caube angrily abused and pursued Him. He wanted to enter the temple, but the priest scolded him and chased him away. Pointing his forefinger at Madana, who had turned into the deity, the son of the Caube said, "You just wait, I will see You tomorrow."

This scene amazed Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. The next day, he arrived a little earlier, at breakfast time, desiring to again have *darśana*. Although she had not yet taken bath, the Caubāin was making *khichrī* for both boys, who were sitting waiting for their breakfast. Maiyā was brushing her teeth with one end of a stick and was stirring the *khichrī* with the other end. When she had finished cooking, she served the boys the hot *khichrī* in bowls, cooling it down by blowing on it with her mouth. The boys were relishing this *khichrī* with great love.

Sanātana Gosvāmī could not tolerate her improper conduct. "Maiyā, it is not proper to cook *khichrī* without taking bath, to stir it with the stick you use to brush your teeth, and then to serve this contaminated breakfast to the boys."

The Caubāin realized her mistake, and replied, "Bābā, from tomorrow, I will be clean when I cook and serve the boys their breakfast."

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī wanted to see some more pastimes of the deity of Śrī Madana-mohana, so on the third day he went there again. Breakfast was delayed that day because Maiyā was taking bath. She then had to clean the pots. The hungry boys were demanding breakfast. Maiyā pacified them, and after completing her morning chores, she started cooking *khichrī*. The two boys were pulling on her cloth and insisting on eating at once. Sanātana Gosvāmī was unable to tolerate this. He approached her and said,

“Maiyā, there is no need for you to be clean by bathing. If this Madana is pleased with your unclean and impure breakfast, then you should do as such. I have committed an offence at your feet. From tomorrow, you should do whatever you think is proper to satisfy them.”

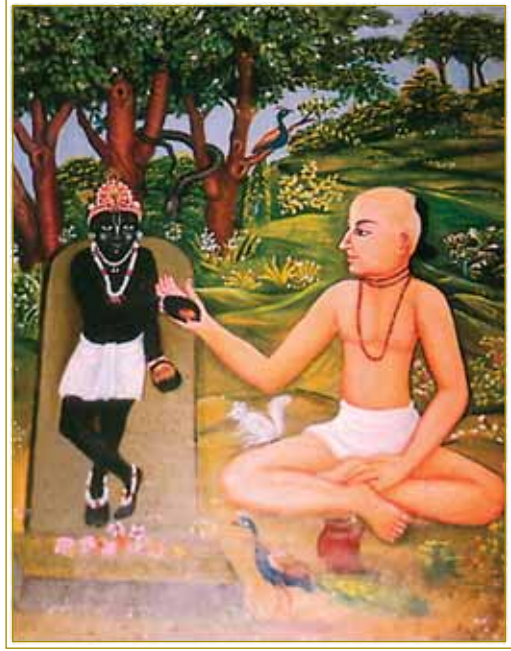
Just as Sanātana Gosvāmī was about to leave, the boy Madana came out of the temple room and said, “Bābā, I will come with you.”

But Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī replied, “I am a completely renounced person. I have neither a place to live, nor any arrangement to cook palatable food. If even Yaśodā-maiyā could not completely satisfy You, how can I take care of You?” The child Madana nonetheless insisted on coming with him. Sanātana Gosvāmī said, “If You really want to come, then You will have to follow me on foot. I cannot carry You on my shoulders.”

The boy said, “I will walk behind you, but do not turn around along the way to look at Me. You can look at Me only at your *bhajana-kuṭī*.”

When Sanātana Gosvāmī had reached his *bhajana-kuṭī*, he turned around and saw the boy Madana smile and change into His deity form. Sanātana Gosvāmī constructed an altar by putting a board on top of a few stones and seated Him there. Every day, he would cook some balls of dough without salt on live coals, and offer them to the deity. One day, as Sanātana Gosvāmī was making his offering, Madana-mohanajī asked him for some salt. Sanātana Gosvāmī would happily have given salt if only he had some, but there was no salt in his hut. Madana-mohanajī told him, “I am not able to swallow this dry dough-ball.” Upon hearing this, Sanātana Gosvāmī began to repent.

At that time, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kapūra, a rich merchant from the Multāna province, happened to be travelling along the Yamunā carrying valuable articles for trade in large boats. As the boats approached Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *bhajana-kuṭī*, they got stuck in the sand. Despite several efforts, the boats could not be released



Śrī Madana-mohana
ᱥ Sanātana Gosvāmī

from the sand. The merchant came ashore and saw the extremely beautiful deity of Śrī Madana-mohana in front of the hut. Sitting down on the invitation of Sanātana Gosvāmī, the merchant began to weep and lament to him about his situation. In his mind, he firmly vowed, “As soon as my boats are freed from the sand, I will construct a beautiful temple for Śrī Madana-mohana with the profits I make from this journey. I will also make proper arrangements for His service and offerings.” The moment he resolved this, his boats were dislodged by themselves and started drifting again. He made an enormous profit from his trade and, on the inspiration of Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, had a huge temple constructed for Śrī Madana-mohana. However, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī entrusted all the arrangements of service, worship, offering and so forth to the priests and again began performing *mādhukarī*¹¹ in Vraja. In this way, he maintained his life by living under a different tree every night and performing rigid *sādhana-bhajana*.

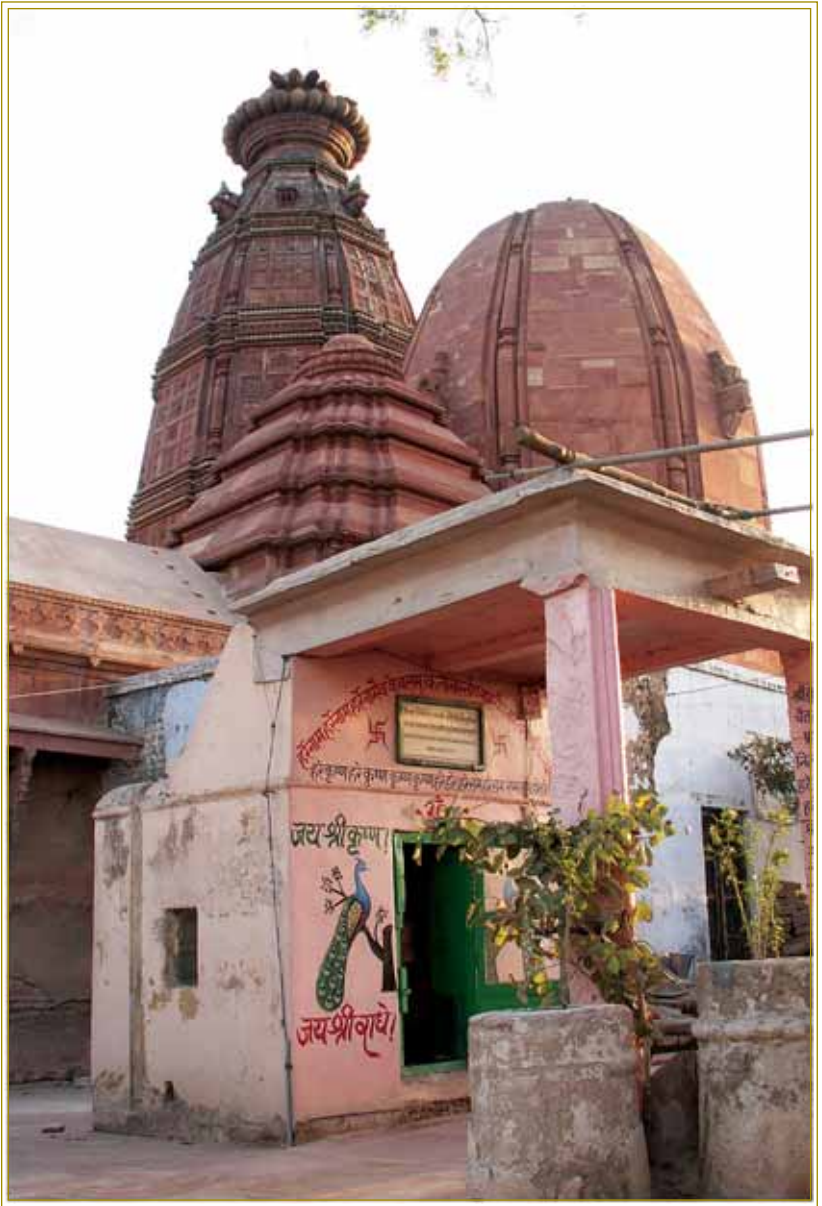


Śrī Madana-mohana Temple

After the disappearance of Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī from this material world, Aurangzeb, who was inimical to the Hindus, desecrated this temple in 1670 AD, destroying the dome and other parts. Before he did this, Madana-mohanajī and other deities of Vṛndāvana had already been moved to Jaipura. Nowadays, Madana-mohanajī resides in Karaulī. In 1748 AD, a *pratibhū-vigraha* of Madana-mohana was established here. Then, in 1819 AD, Śrī Nandalāla Vasu constructed the present temple.

The ancient hand-written books, *Sevā-prākāṣya* and *Iṣṭalābha*, mention that Sanātana Gosvāmī obtained Śrī Madana-Gopāla from Paraśurāma Caube of Mahāvana in *saṃvat* 1590 (1534 AD) and re-established the deity's service and worship in the same year on Śuklā-dvītīyā (the second day of the bright moon) of Māgha (January–February). He entrusted the duties of the service and worship to Kṛṣṇadāsa Brahmācārī. At that time, there was no

ŚRĪ VṚJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭī



Śrī Madana-mohana

deity of Śrī Rādhikā with Śrī Madana-mohana. Śrī Puroṣottama Jānā, the father of King Pratāparudra of Orissa, arranged with great faith to send two deities of Rādhā from Purī-dhāma to Vṛndāvana. Śrī Madana-mohana informed the priest in his dream, “The taller of the two deities from Purī is Lalitājī, and the shorter is Rādhājī. You should place the deity of Rādhikā on My left side and the deity of Lalitā on My right side.” It is mentioned in *Bhakti-ratnākara* that Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī built a temple for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the southern part of Śrī Madana-mohana’s temple, but Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not come to Vṛndāvana a second time.

In the new temple, Rādhikā stands on Śrī Madana-mohana’s left side and Lalitā stands on His right side. A *śalāgrāma-śilā* is also there, and Śrī Jagannātha presides in a separate room (*prakoṣṭha*). Places of *darśana* near the old temple are Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *bhajana-kuṭī*, *samādhi* and the *grantha-samādhi*.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī's samādhi



The grantha-samādhi

Śrī Gopīnātha

Close to the famous Vamśīvaṭa, on the bank of the Yamunā, Śrī Paramānanda Bhaṭṭācārya and Madhu Paṇḍita used to worship Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala with extreme renunciation. Once, the current of the Yamunā cut into her bank and a very beautiful deity of Śrī Gopīnātha was revealed from under the sand. In the morning, when the devotee Paramānanda came to the Yamunā to bathe, he found this exceptional deity who stole his heart. He entrusted the service of Śrī Gopīnātha to Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita. First, Śrī Gopīnātha resided near Vamśīvaṭa, but later on a magnificent new temple was constructed elsewhere and His service and worship continued there.

Once, Nityānanda Prabhu's wife Jāhnavaḥ Ṭhākuraṇī came to Vṛndāvana. As she was having *darśana* of Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha, she thought that the deity of Rādhikā was too small and that,



Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha & Anāṅga Mañjarī (right)

if Rādhikā had been a little taller, the Couple would look much more beautiful. Jāhnavā Ṭhākuraṇī returned to her residence after beholding the evening ceremony. That night, in a dream, Śrī Gopīnātha asked Jāhnavā to arrange for a taller deity of Rādhikā. She received similar instructions from Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and had a deity of Her made that was a more appropriate size for the deity of Gopīnātha. The book *Bhakta-māla* describes that at the time of Jāhnavā Ṭhākuraṇī's disappearance, she revealed her own deity and established herself in it. She instructed the priests to install the deity of her in the chamber of Śrī Gopīnātha. When this deity arrived at the temple of Gopīnātha in Vṛndāvana, the priests hesitated to install her along side Śrī Gopīnātha. At that time, Gopīnāthajī Himself instructed the priests, "Do not hesitate. This is My beloved Anaṅga Mañjarī. Place her on My left and Rādhikā on My right." And so it came to be that Jāhnavā stands on Śrī Gopīnātha's left side and Rādhikā stands on His right.

During the oppression of Aurangzeb, the original deities of Gopīnāthajī, Rādhikā and Jāhnavā also proceeded to Jaipura together with other deities. The *pratibhū-vidyās* now preside in the temple built by Nandakumāra Vasu. Jāhnavā Ṭhākuraṇī is seated on the left side of Gopīnātha, and Lalitā Sakhī and a small deity of Rādhikā are seated on His right. The deity of Mahāprabhu Śrī Gaurasundara is in a separate chamber. In 1632 AD, the original temple was built by Rāya Singh, the son of the king of Bikānera, Mahārāja Kalyāṇamala of the Rāṭhaur dynasty. Aurangzeb destroyed this temple. The *pratibhū-vidyās* were established in 1748 AD, and the new temple was built in 1819 AD. Near the new temple to the east is the *samādhī* of Madhu Paṇḍita.

Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara

This temple is situated within the area of Sevā-kuñja. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī used to live here in his *bhajana-kuṭī*. The contemporary Gosvāmīs and devotees assembled here for *iṣṭagoṣṭhīs* and, in those gatherings of Vaiṣṇavas, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa would elucidate on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in his melodious voice. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī compiled *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and other sacred texts on *bhakti* at this place. The young Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī was engaged in all kinds of service to Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, who personally manifested the deity of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara with his own hands and offered the service and worship to Śrī Jīva. According to the book *Sevā-prākāṣya*, Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara were installed in *saṁvat* 1599 (1543 AD) in the month of Māgha (January–February) on Śuklā-daśamī (the tenth day of the bright half of the month). The original Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara are now in Jaipura, and Their *pratibhū-vigrahas*, which are as potent as the original deities, are in Vṛndāvana. On the altar with Them are Śrī Vṛndāvana-candra,

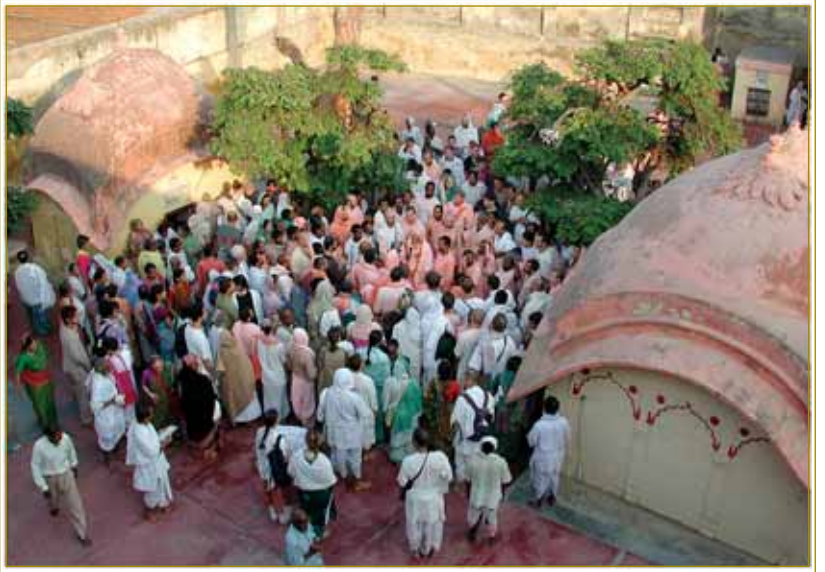


The pratibhū-vigrahas of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara

ŚRĪ VṚJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Śrī Chailacikaniyā, Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava and a few others. The *samādhis* of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī lie behind the temple, and in the northern area of the temple are the *samādhi* and *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. Adjacent to this is the *samādhi* of Śrī Būgarbha Gosvāmī.

Sanātana Gosvāmī used to perform *parikramā* of Govardhana daily. In his old age, when he became incapable of performing *parikramā*, Kṛṣṇa came to him as a boy and gave him a *govardhana-silā*, which was one-and-a-half cubits long and shaped like a banyan leaf. He instructed Sanātana Gosvāmī to perform *parikramā* of this *silā* instead. On this *silā* are imprints of Kṛṣṇa's foot, His flute and a cow's hoof. Sanātana Gosvāmī brought that *silā* to Vṛndāvana and would circumambulate it daily. After his disappearance, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī installed the *silā* in the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara and began to worship it. *Darśana* of this *silā* is available on special request.

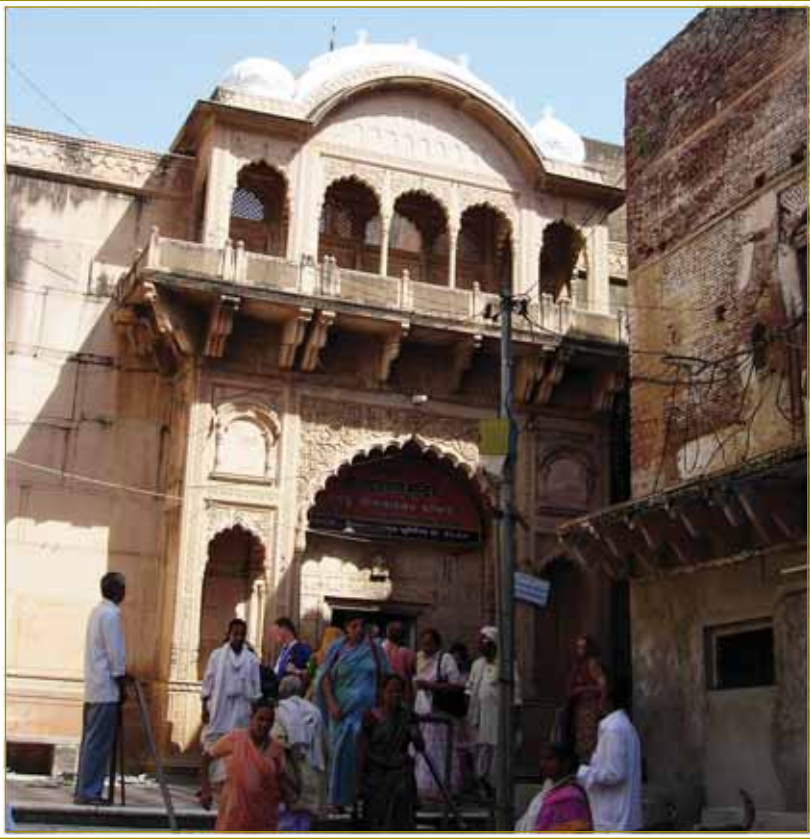


Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭī* & *samādhi*

Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa

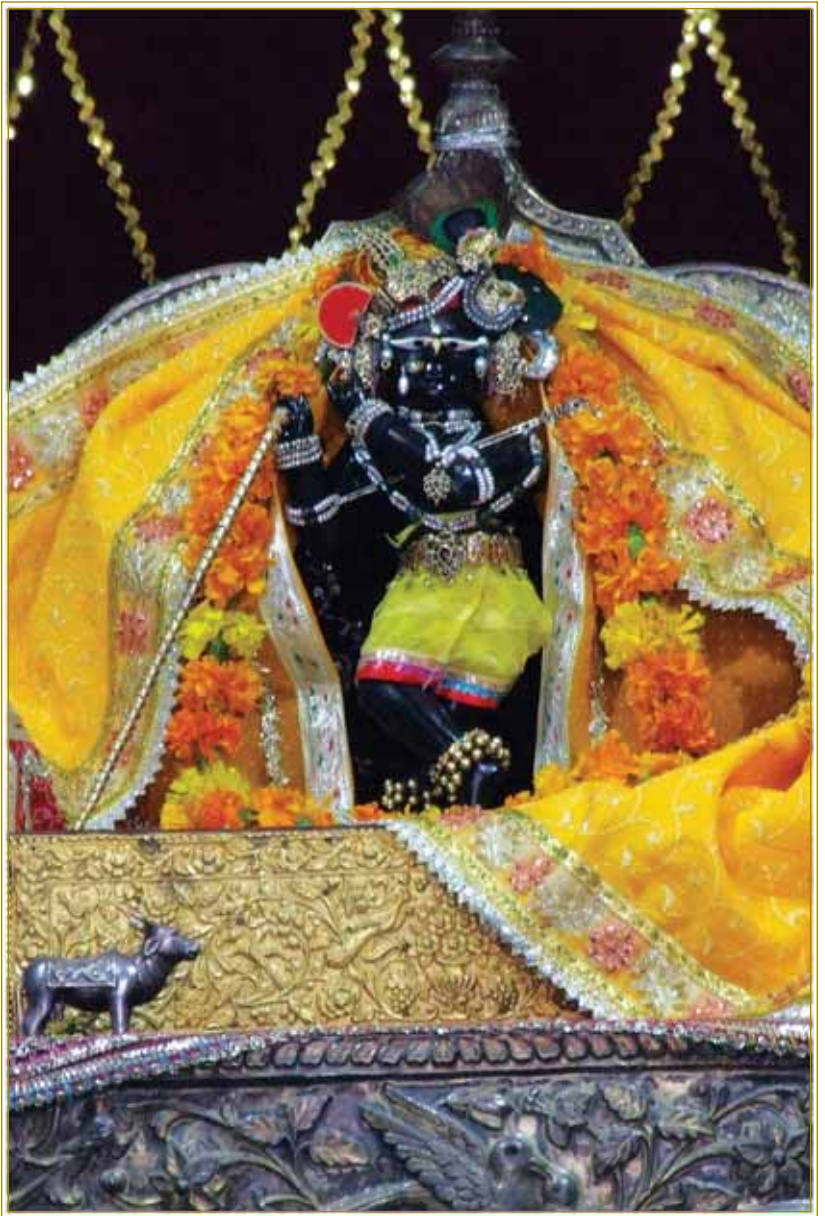
Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa is the deity of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, the recipient of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's mercy. Śrī Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī initially served and worshipped a *śālagrāma-silā*. Once, he intensely desired to decorate his *śālagrāma*, to seat Him on a swing and sway Him back and forth, and to serve Him in many ways like a deity. "If only He had arms and legs like a deity," he thought.

Prabhu is very kind to His devotees. To fulfil the desire of this *bhakta*, He transformed Himself that very night into the attractive



Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa Temple

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa

threefold-bending form of Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa. Śrī Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī decorated Him with many ornaments, swung Him on a swing and offered food preparations with great affection. If one has *darśana* of Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa's back, one will see that it resembles a *śālagrāma-silā*. Although the deity is only twelve finger-widths tall, He is very attractive. Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa's lotus face is like Śrī Govinda's, His chest is like Śrī Gopinātha's, and His lotus feet are like Śrī Madana-mohana's. By taking His *darśana*, one receives the benefit of taking *darśana* of these three deities.

According to the book *Sevā-prākāṭya*, Rādhā-Ramaṇa manifested from the *śālagrāma-silā* in *saṁvat* 1599 (1543 AD). His *abhiṣeka* took place on Pūrṇimā in the month of Vaiśākha (April–May) that same year. There is no deity of Śrī Rādhā with Rādhā-Ramaṇa, but a *gomatī-cakra* is worshipped on the altar to His left. According to an injunction in *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, a *gomatī-cakra* is to be worshipped along with a *śālagrāma-silā*.

Adjacent to the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa, to the south, is the *samādhi* of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and the place where Rādhā-Ramaṇa appeared. Unlike other deities, Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa never left Vṛndāvana.

Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda & Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda

Before the arrival of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Vṛndāvana, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī and Śrī Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī came here. Being very humble and without any possessions (*akiñcana*), they performed *bhajana* at the many pastime places in Vraja-maṇḍala. Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī found the deity of Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda in Kiśorī-kuṇḍa in Umrāo-gaon near Chatravana and served Them there. Later, on the request of Rūpa, Sanātana and the other Gosvāmīs, he brought his worshipful Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda to Vṛndāvana and began to worship Them near the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa. Nowadays, the original deity that was worshipped by Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī is in Jaipura, and the *pratibhū-vigraha* is worshipped in that same temple in Vṛndāvana.



Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda & Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda

Śrī Gokulānanda, who appeared at Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa through Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, also arrived in this temple later on. The *govardhana-silā* given by Śrīman Mahāprabhu to Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī used to be present here. The original deity of Śrī Gokulānanda is now also situated in Jaipura with Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda. In the courtyard of the temple are the *samādhis* of Śrī Lokaṇātha Gosvāmī, Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura and Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

Śrī Sākṣī-gopāla

West of the Śrī Govinda Temple are the ruins of the Sākṣī-gopāla Temple. This ancient deity of Gopāla went to Vidyānagara to act as a witness (*sākṣī*). Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta* narrates the amazing story of Śrī Gopālajī, who is loving to His devotees (*bhakta-vatsala*). In this case, this refers to an older and a younger *brāhmaṇa*. Upon arriving at Vidyānagara, Śrī Gopālajī testified before the assembled people. He said, “The older *brāhmaṇa* was very

pleased with the service of the younger *brāhmaṇa*, and promised to give his daughter in marriage to him. I am the witness to this statement.” In time, this deity went to Śrī Jagannātha Purī and is now present in Satyavādīpura, about twelve miles from Purī. Now, Satyavādīpura is famous by the name of Sākṣī-gopāla. Since then, the temple of Sākṣī-gopāla in Vṛndāvana has been deserted, and today only its ruins remain.

Śrī Madana-mohana (the second)

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa is, according to *Bhakta-māla*, a *sikṣā* disciple of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī. He is accepted within the spiritual family lineage of Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita. Being expert in the art of singing, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa received the title *vāṇikāra*. This Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa served the deity of Śrī Madana-mohana [the second]. This temple lies in the Bhaṭṭa neighbourhood opposite the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha. At this place *samāja* (the singing of pastimes) is performed with great celebration. The deity here is very beautiful. There is a very old copy of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in this temple.

Śrī Śyāmasundara

The temple of Śrī Śyāmasundara is situated near the Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple. Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, the deities established and worshipped by *gauḍīya-vedānta-ācārya* Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, are very beautiful. Opposite the entrance door of the temple is the *samādhi* of Śrī Śyāmānanda Prabhu.

Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa was born in a village near the famous Remunā in Orissa. He studied grammar, rhetoric and logic in an academic village on the bank of Cilkā-hrada. After this, he went to Mysore to study the Vedas. In Uḍupī, he deeply studied *Madhva-bhāṣya* along with *Śaṅkara-bhāṣya*, *Pārijāta-bhāṣya* and other commentaries (*bhāṣyas*) on the Vedānta. After some time, he studied in Śrī Dhāma Jagannātha Purī the *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhās* under Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara, a disciple of Śrī Rasikānanda Prabhu. At



Śrī Śyāmasundara Temple

this time, he came to know of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara's profound scholarship and devout life and became his disciple. Later on, in Vṛndāvana, he studied Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the books of the Gosvāmīs from the famous *gauḍīya rasikācārya* Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and, on his instruction, went to Jaipura. At the well-known Galtā in Jaipura, he defeated the scholars of the Śrī *sampradāya* and other opponents to the Gauḍīya line, and established the deity of Śrī Vijaya-gopāla. To increase the faith of the local scholars, he composed Śrī Govinda-bhāṣya on *Brahma-sūtra* there, and re-installed Śrī Rādhājī beside Śrī Govindadeva in the famous Govinda Temple. Some of the books he composed, which have enlarged the treasure house of Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature, are *Govinda-bhāṣya*, *Siddhānta-ratnam*, *Vedānta-syāmantaka*, *Prameya-ratnāvalī*, *Siddhānta-darpaṇa* and a commentary on *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha*.

Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava

Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī's deities used to reside in an ancient temple on the old bank of the Yamunā at Bhrāmara-ghāṭa, north of Śrī Gokulanānda Temple. Nowadays, they are being served in an extensive temple in Jaipura at a hilly place known as Ghāṭī. This temple is prominent in Jaipura and is called Kanaka Vṛndāvana.

North-east of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava Temple is the large temple of Śrī Yugala-Kiśora. The dome of this temple is broken.

Śrī Bānke-bihārī

Svāmī Haridāsa recovered Śrī Bānke-bihārī from Viśākhā-kuṇḍa in Nidhuvana. In this temple there is no deity of Śrī Rādhikā next to Kṛṣṇa. On Akṣaya-tṛtīyā in the month of Vaiśākhā, one can have *darśana* of Śrī Bānke-bihārī's lotus feet. Śrī Bānke-bihārī previously resided in Nidhuvana, but then moved to the present temple. During the Muslim oppression, Śrī Bānke-bihārījī secretly



Śrī Bānke-bihārī

ŚRĪ VṚJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

stayed in Vṛndāvana and did not leave. The *darśana* of Śrī Bāṅke-bihārī is performed in a very special way. The curtain is drawn every few minutes, thus making the *darśana* very short. This is known as *jhāṅkī-darśana*, “a momentary *darśana*”. The reason for this brief *darśana* is His *bhakta-vātsalya* (particular affection for His devotees) and His *rasika* nature. The following pastime demonstrates this.

Once, an eminent *bhakta* came for Śrī Bāṅke-bihārī’s *darśana*. He gazed intently at the deity for a long time. *Rasika* Bāṅke-bihārījī became so attracted to him that He went with him to his village. Later, when the *gosvāmīs* of Bihārījī came to know of this, they traced Him and, after much pleading brought the deity back to the temple. After this incident, a momentary *darśana* was introduced so that no one again can gaze upon Him for a long time.

The unique feature of the Bāṅke-bihārījī Temple is that there is no *maṅgala-āratī*. The *gosvāmīs* of this temple say that because Ṭhākuraḥ performs *rāsa* every night, He becomes exhausted and goes to sleep in the early morning and it is therefore improper to wake Him at that time.

Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha

This is the deity served by Svāmī Śrī Hitahari-vaṁśa Mahārāja, who received the deity of Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha as dowry at his wedding. There is no deity of Śrī Rādhikā with Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha, but there is a crown on the altar instead, which is worshipped as Śrī Rādhikā. This deity is very attractive.

Śrī Yugala-Kiśorajī

Śrī Yugala-Kiśorajī is situated in Kiśorivana, or Vyāsa-gherā, near Śrī Sevā-kuñja. Mādhava dāsa, a disciple of Śrī Mādhavendra Purī, was a famous *bhakta ācārya*. Śrī Nābhā dāsa has described his character in *Bhakta-māla*. His disciple, Abhirāma Vyāsa, a resident of Orachā, revealed this deity through Harirāma Vyāsajī. Nearby in the garden is the *samādhi* of Śrī Vyāsajī.

There is a second Yugala-Kiśorajī whose temple lies on a hillock near Keśī-gḥāṭa. Jhānā-Pannā Rājā established this temple.

During the reign of Mughal emperor Akbara, the two Rājapūta brothers Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Govinda dāsa Ṭhākura built the temple of a third Yugala-Kiśorajī. The brothers were from the family of Tomara and belonged to the village of Nīmkaṭhānā in Jaipura.

Śrī Lālā Bābū Temple

Śrī Lālā Bābū was a famous and wealthy landlord of East Bengal. He used to go for walks a little distance from his mansion on the other side of the river, along its elegant bank. Once, as he was walking, he heard a boatman remark, “O brother, the day is over. Go across.” Hearing the boatman’s words, he became immersed in contemplation. He crossed the river by boat and returned home. The next day, during his walk, he heard the voice of a washerman addressing his wife, “The day is over; go and burn the *vāsanā*.” (Washermen burn banana plants and prepare a kind of alkali for washing clothes. In Bengali, the bark of the banana plant is called *vāsanā*. But, *vāsanā* also means “desire” or “passion”.) Lālā Bābū took this remark to mean, “The day is over; the days of your life are also over. Quickly burn your lusty desires.” The statements of the boatman and the washerman left a deep impression on him. He abandoned his grandiose life and his family and came to Vṛndāvana, where he began performing *bhajana*. *Bhakta* Lālā Bābū installed the deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra in 1810 AD in this magnificent stone temple.

Śāhajī Temple

A resident of Lucknow, Seṭh Kundanalāla Śāha, constructed this grand, white marble-stone temple in 1835 AD at great expense. He was an unalloyed devotee of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This temple presently gives some idea of the incomparable grandeur of Vṛndāvana in previous times.

ŚRĪ VRĀJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Sāhajī Temple



Śrī Raṅgajī Temple

Śrī Raṅgajī Temple

In 1851 AD, Śrī Lakṣmīcanda Seṭh built this temple at the expense of 4.5 million *rupees*. Following the style of the famous Śrī Raṅgam Temple in South India, Śrī Raṅgajī presides in the main temple within many walls, with Lakṣmī-devī massaging His feet. At the eastern gate of the temple is a huge Garuḍa-stambha, which is completely covered with gold leaf. The general public call it *Sone kā Tāla-vṛkṣa*, “The Golden Palm Tree”. Near the main entrance, in the north, is a pond. Yearly on Baladeva-pūrṇimā, the pastime of the fight between the elephant Gajendra and the crocodile is displayed in this pond, with Śrī Hari protecting the surrendered elephant. Near the western door is a huge chariot, upon which Śrī Raṅgajī rides on special occasions.



Śrī Raṅgajī

Śrījī Temple

Mahārānī Ānandakumarī-devī, the Queen of Jaya Singh, a king of Jaipura, had this temple constructed in 1826 AD. Two set of deities are installed here, Śrī Ānanda-manohara and Śrī Vṛndāvana-candra.

Varddhamāna Mahārāja-kuñja

This *kuñja* is situated opposite the temple of Śrījī, on the other side of the road. The devotee queen Rājarājeśvarī-devī, wife of Śrī Kirticānda, a *mahārāja* of Varddhamān in Bengal, built this temple. She also arranged for the *ghāṭas* of Pāvana-sarovara in Nandagaon to be constructed out of stone.

Brahmacārī Ṭhākura-bāḍī

Mahārāja Jiyājī Sindhiyā of Gwalior built this magnificent temple in 1860 AD. He offered the service of the deities to his spiritual guide, Śrī Gīridhārī dāsa Brahmacārī. In this temple are three deities – Śrī Rādhā-Gopāla, Haṁsa-Gopāla and Nitya-Gopāla – who preside in three separate chambers. This grand, stone temple is situated near the Lālā Bābū Temple.

Śrī Ṭikārīrānī Ṭhākura-bāḍī

This temple is located in the northern part of Vṛndāvana on the bank of the Yamunā. In 1871 AD this temple was built by Queen Indrajīta-kumārī and was famous for its hospitality. The Queen's husband was Hitakāma Ṭhākura, a king of Ṭikārī in the district of Gayā in Bihāra. Three deities reside in this temple – Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Rādhā-Gopāla and Śrī Laḍḍū-Gopāla.

Śāhajāpura Temple

This temple is located in Retiyā-bāzāra. The *divāna*, or court-minister, of Śāhajāpura state, Lālā Vrajakiśorajī, constructed it in 1873 AD. The deity in this temple is Śrī Rādhā-Gopāla, whose beautiful *darśana* is very grand.

Mahārānī Svarṇamayī Temple

This temple is located near the bank of the Yamunā and was built by Mahārānī Svarṇamayī, wife of Kumāra Kṛṣṇanātha. He was the great grandson of the well-known Kānta Bābū of Kāsīmabāzāra, West Bengal. Previously, a deity of Śrī Śyāmasundara was worshipped in this temple. Now Śrī Gopīnāthajī, installed by Mahārānī, resides here.

Jaipura-vālā Temple

Mahārāja Mādho Singh of Jaipura had this grand temple built over a period spanning almost thirty years and expended much money on it. The main temple has three doors. In the northern chamber is Śrī Ānanda-Bihārījī; in the central chamber is Śrī Rādhā-Mādhavajī; and in the southern chamber are Śrī Nitya-Gopālajī, Śrī Giridhārījī, and the deities of Śrī Nārada and Śrī Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana and Sanata Kumāra. The deities in this temple were installed in 1916 AD.

Savāmana Śālagrāma

A huge Savāmana Śālagrāma presides in a two-storey temple in the corner of Loi-bāzār, opposite the temple of Śrī Śyāmasundara. *Savāmana* refers to a weight of nearly forty-seven kilos. The deities of Śrī Sītā-Rāma are also here. In the old temple of Śrī Govindajī is another *śālagrāma* of *savāmana*.

Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva

This temple is situated at the junction of three roads at the end of Aṭhkhambā, coming from the famous Bānke-bihārī Temple.

During his stay in Vṛndāvana, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī resided in his *bhajana-kuṭī* near the old Śrī Madana-mohana Temple, and would daily go for *darśana* of Śrī Gopīśvara Mahādeva. When Sanātana Gosvāmī became old, Śrī Gopīśvara Mahādeva instructed him one day in a dream, “In your old age, please do not go to so much trouble to take my *darśana*. I myself will appear at Bankhaṇḍī



Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva

nearer to your *bhajana-kuṭī*.” That very next day, Śrī Gopīśvara Mahādeva appeared in Bankhaṇḍī. Seeing this, Sanātana Gosvāmī became overwhelmed in ecstatic emotions. From that day on, he would take *darśana* of Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva each day before returning to his *bhajana-kuṭī*. Because Śrī Gopīśvara Mahādeva appeared in Bankhaṇḍī, he became known by the name Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva.

Aṣṭa-sakhī-kuñja

Aṣṭa-sakhī-kuñja is situated near the old temple of Śrī Madana-mohana. In the centre is Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala, and surrounding them are the deities of eight *sakhīs*, four on each side. In 1296 AD, the Mahārāja of Hetamapura, Rāmarañjana Cakravartī, and his wife Padmāsundarī had this temple built and installed the deity of Śrī Rādhā-Rāsabihārī here.



The deities at Aṣṭa-sakhī-kuṅja

Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda Jamāi Ṭhākura (Taḍāsa-vālā Temple)

This temple is also called the Ṭhākura-bāḍī of Rājaraṣi Rāya Vanamālī dāsa. It is situated on the left side of an unpaved lane some distance from the main road that leads from Vṛndāvana to Mathurā. Śrī Vāñchārāmajī, an official in the Taḍāsa state in Bengal, was a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Daily, he used to take bath in the flowing water of a nearby river. Once, while taking his morning bath, he heard a very sweet voice coming from inside the river. “Please take Me out of the water and take Me home,” the voice said. However Śrī Vāñchārāma was unable to see the source of that voice in the nearby vicinity. The next day, the same thing happened. While bathing on the third day, he not only heard the sweet voice but simultaneously felt the touch of something under the water. When he picked up the object that touched him, he saw that it was an amazingly beautiful deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That same deity became famous by the name of Śrī Vinoda-Ṭhākura.

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By His own will, Śrī Ṭhākuraḥ arrived at the house of the great devotee, Śrī Vanamālī Rāya, and the regular service of the deity began there. The only daughter of Śrī Vanamālī Rāya was extremely beautiful, highly qualified and especially devoted. When the princess had *darśana* of Śrī Vinoda-Ṭhākura, she became fascinated by His sweet smile. Śrī Vinoda-Ṭhākura also began to play directly with that girl whose name was Rādhā. One day, He caught the corner of the princess's *sari* and said, "You should marry Me." After some time, the princess became ill. Ṭhākura Vinodajī told Rādhā's mother in a dream, "Rādhā will not survive now. You should make one deity of Rādhā from the wood of the dry cedar tree in your garden and marry her to Me." And so it happened that as soon as the deity of Rādhā was installed, the princess Rādhā passed away. The cremation of Princess Rādhā was carried out at the same time that Rādhā's deity form was being installed beside Ṭhākura Vinodajī. Śrī Vinoda-Ṭhākura now became Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī Ṭhākura. After some time, Śrī Vanamālī Rāyabahādura went to Vṛndāvana and brought Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī Ṭhākuraḥ with him. He constructed a temple at this place and established Ṭhākuraḥ here.

Rājaraṣi Rāya Vanamālī dāsa was a highly pious great person of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. He published one edition of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with eight commentaries in the *devanāgarī* script. In about 1954 AD, our most worshipful *om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja collected a set of this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with its eight commentaries from the Taḍāsa Temple. [Today these books are still well-kept in the library of the author.]

Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha

This temple has been described earlier in the book. It is situated in Dāna, Māna and Sevā-kuñja-galīs near Sevā-kuñja. Presiding here are the wonderful deities of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī, Śrī Vṛndā-devī and Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna

Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. In Vṛndāvana, Śrī Vṛndā-devī's *darśana* is available only in this temple. On the upper floor of the temple, one can have an exquisite *darśana* of Sevā-kuñja.

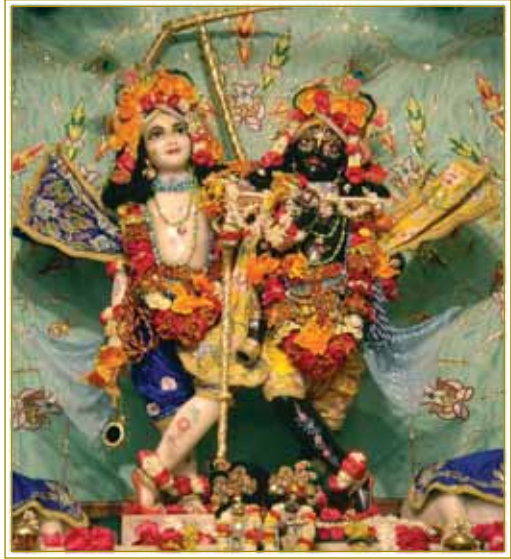
Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Temple

This temple was established in 1975 by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, and is situated in Ramaṇa-reti on the Vṛndāvana–Chaṭṭīkarā road. The presiding deities in this temple are Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma in the middle chamber, Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara with Lalitā and Viśākhā in the chamber on the right and Śrī Gaura-Nitāi in the chamber on the left. At the side is a deity of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. The *samādhi* of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja is also here. In his last years, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja asked the author to place him in *samādhi*, and this ceremony took place during Kartika (November) in 1977. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja used to call Bombay his office, Māyāpura his place of *sādhana*, and Vṛndāvana his *nitya-siddha* abode, his home.



The samādhi ceremony of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja

ŚRĪ VṚJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ



Kṛṣṇa & Balarāma



Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Temple

THE TWELVE FORESTS OF ŚRĪ VṚNDĀVĀṆA

Within the ten miles *parikramā* of Vṛndāvana, there are twelve forests, or *vanas*. A brief description of them is given below.

(1) Śrī Aṭalavana

This forest lies in the southern part of Vṛndāvana. Aṭala-tīrtha and Aṭala-bihārījī are situated here. At Bhātroḷa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* relished the many palatable dishes that the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* gave them. When they came to this place as they were returning to Chaṭṭīkarā Nanda-Gokula, Kṛṣṇa's friends asked Him about the palatable foodstuffs they had taken earlier that day. "O *sakhā*, how was the food today?" they inquired.

With great delight, Kṛṣṇa replied, "I have become immovable (*aṭala*), having taken that food." Kṛṣṇa was feeling so full that He was unable to continue walking further. Since then, this forest has become famous by the name Aṭalavana. It is situated near the junction of the Vṛndāvana–Mathurā road and the Vṛndāvana *parikramā* path.

(2) Kevārivana

This forest is situated north-west of Aṭalavana and contains Dāvānala-kuṇḍa, which has been described earlier. After Kṛṣṇa swallowed the forest fire, the *gopas* and *gopīs* looked around with great surprise and said, "Ke *nivāri*? – Who has saved us from the hands of death?" For this reason, this forest became famous as Kevārivana.

(3) Vihāravana

This forest is situated south-west of Kevārivana. It is here that Rādhā-kūpa is found. The pilgrims performing Vṛndāvana *parikramā* use to loudly call "Rādhā, Rādhā" into this well and hear the echo. Nearby in Ramaṇa-retī are *āśramas* of renounced great

personalities. At Śrī Bhāgavat-nivāsa, one can have *darśana* of Śrī Giridhārī and the *guñjā-mālā* worshipped by Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī. *Pūjyapāda* Śrī Bhakti Hṛdaya Bon Mahārāja, a disciple of *jagad-guru* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, established a spiritual college, “Viśva-vaiṣṇava-vidyālaya”, here.

(4) Gocāraṇavana

This forest is situated to the west of Vihāravana on the old bank of the Yamunā. A temple of Śrī Varāhadeva and Gautama Muni’s *āśrama* are here.

(5) Śrī Kālīya-damanavana

This forest lies north of Gocāraṇavana and contains many ancient *kadamba* trees. Among them is the *keli-kadamba* tree on which Śrī Kṛṣṇa climbed to a high branch, tied His yellow cloth around His waist and jumped into the Yamunā to subdue the Kālīya serpent. This is a *keli-kadamba* tree, and because Kṛṣṇa performed a pastime (*keli*) here this particular tree is also known as Keli-kadamba. Adjacent to this *keli-kadamba* is the *bhajana-kuṭī* and *samādhi* of Śrī Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī. Nearby on the bank of Kālīya-daha is Śrīla Bilvamaṅgala’s place of *bhajana*.

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala was a resident of a village on the bank of the Kṛṣṇabenvā river in South India. In his youth, he became so attached to Cintāmaṇi, a beautiful prostitute, that he even went to meet her on the day of his father’s *śrāddha* ceremony. With the help of a decayed corpse, he crossed the fearsome river that had overflowed its banks. Then after scaling a wall by grasping a black snake, thinking it to be a rope, he arrived at the prostitute’s house. The prostitute scolded him, saying, “If you had the same deep attachment for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that you have for my bones, skin and body which is covered with foul smelling dirt, then your auspiciousness would be guaranteed.” When Bilvamaṅgala heard this, he became detached from worldly existence and proceeded to Vṛndāvana. On the way, he met a young woman to

whom he became attracted. Taking a sharp pin, he pierced his eyes and became blind. The playful *rasika* Kṛṣṇa then bestowed His mercy upon Bilvamaṅgala and brought him to Vṛndāvana, where he stayed for some time at Govardhana. There, he received a momentary *darśana* of his worshipful deities Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rādhikā. He then came to Vṛndāvana and resided near Kāliya-daha, where he performed *bhajana*. It is said that approximately seven hundred years later, he transmitted his transcendental power into Śrī Vallabhācārya so he could establish his disciplic line (Puṣṭimārga). He performed his disappearance pastime here.

(6) Śrī Gopālavana

This forest is situated north of Kāliya-damanavana. The deities of Śrī Nanda and Yaśodājī are in a temple here. After Kṛṣṇa subdued the Kāliya serpent, Śrī Nanda Bābā donated a vast number of cows to the *brāhmaṇas* for Kṛṣṇa's welfare.

(7) Nikuñjavana

This forest is also named Sevā-kuñja. Nearby are four narrow lanes (*galis*) – Dāna-galī, Māna-galī, Gumāna-galī and Kuñja-galī. This is where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoy Their eternal pastimes, and where the supremely *rasika* Kṛṣṇa massages the lotus feet of the fatigued Rādhājī. We have already described Lalitā-kuṇḍa and the other places in this forest.

(8) Nidhuvana

This well-known forest is situated north of Nikuñjavana. Viśākhā-kuṇḍa, where Śrī Bānke-bihārī manifested, is here. This forest is also described earlier.

(9) Rādhāvana (Rādhā-bāga)

This forest is located in the north-east corner of Vṛndāvana, on the bank of the Yamunā. It is said that after Śrīmatī Rādhikā bathed, Lalitā and the other *sakhīs* would comb Her hair and

decorate Her here. Svāmī Haridāsa's place of *bhajana* as well as Ṭaṭiyā-sthāna, which is attractively decorated with densely-foliated trees, is here. This place is very famous for the service of devotees and saintly personalities.

(10) Jhūlanavana

This forest is situated south of Rādhā-bāga and is where the *sakhīs* used to swing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala. Here, frolicsome Kṛṣṇa would also seat Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs* one by one beside Him on a swing. He would then swing them with such a force that they would not be able to keep their clothes on their bodies and, out of fear, they would cling to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The Gauḍīya *gosvāmīs* have described the swing pastimes (*jhūlana-līlā*) of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in their literatures.

(11) Śrī Gahvaravana

This forest is situated south of Jhūlanavana, and is where the famous Pānī-ghāṭa lies. Here the *gopīs*, on the advice of Kṛṣṇa, crossed the overflowing Yamunā on their way to the *āśrama* of Mahārṣi Durvāsā and fed him fifty-six different kinds of preparations. This has been described earlier.

(12) Śrī Papaḍavana

This forest lies south of Gahvaravana. Ādi-badrīvana and Ādi-badrī-ghāṭa are also situated here. At this place, Śrī Kṛṣṇa arranged for the *gopīs* to take *darśana* of Ādi-badrīnātha. It is also said that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsadeva received the inspiration to manifest *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* here. In the rough and dry Badrikāśrama in the Himālayas, it is impossible to compose such a literature, which is filled with *rasa* and saturated with the sweet pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Even now, an extensive forest of *ber* or *badrī* trees is found in this area. It may be that Śrī Vyāsadeva also taught *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is filled with *rasa*, to Śukadeva Gosvāmī at this place.

THE FAMOUS GHĀṬAS OF ŚRĪ VṚNDĀVĀṆA

There are numerous *ghāṭas* on the banks of Śrī Yamunā in Vṛndāvana. Of them, those that are renowned are described below.

Varāha-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is situated in the south-western part of Vṛndāvana on the old bank of the Yamunā. Śrī Varāhadeva is also present on top of the bank. Nearby is the *āśrama* of Gautama Muni.

Kāliya-damana-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is also called Kāliya-daha, and is situated on the old bank of the Yamunā about half a mile north of Varāha-ghāṭa. The pastime of this place has already been described. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa reached the riverbank after subduing Kāliya, Vrajarāja Nanda and Vrajeśvarī Śrī Yaśodā soaked Him with their tears, and very carefully and thoroughly examined His body. They wondered, “Has our *lālā* been hurt anywhere?” Here, Mahārāja Nanda donated many cows to the *brāhmaṇas* for Kṛṣṇa’s welfare.

Sūrya-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is also called Āditya-ghāṭa, and is situated north of Gopāla-ghāṭa. The hillock (*ṭilā*) above this *ghāṭa* is called Āditya-ṭilā. On this hillock stands the temple of Śrī Madana-mohanajī, the life and soul of Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. This has also been described earlier. Praskandana-tīrtha is also here.

Yugala-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is situated north of Sūrya-ghāṭa. Above this *ghāṭa* is the old temple of Śrī Yugala-bihārī. It is in a dilapidated state and is without a dome. A temple of Śrī Yugala-Kiśora near Keśī-ghāṭa is in a similar dilapidated condition.

Vihāra-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is situated north of Yugala-ghāṭa and is where Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala used to bathe and sport in the water (*jal-vihāra*), and frolick in many other ways.

Āndhera-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is found north of Yugala-ghāṭa. Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* used to play “blind man’s bluff” in the garden adjacent to this *ghāṭa*. The *gopīs* covered their eyes with their hands while Śrī Kṛṣṇa hid somewhere nearby. The *gopīs* then searched for Him. Sometimes, Śrī Kiśorījī would hide in this way and the others would look for Her.

Imlīlā-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is north of Āndhera-ghāṭa. When Mahāprabhu Śrī Caitanyadeva was residing in Vṛndāvana, He would sit under the *imlī* tree here. This *imlī* tree was ancient and had survived from the time of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Mahāprabhu would chant the holy names of Hari here, completely absorbed in *prema*. Therefore, this *ghāṭa* is also known as Gaurāṅga-ghāṭa. This pastime place has also been mentioned earlier.

Śṛṅgāra-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is situated somewhat to the east of Imalīlā-ghāṭa, on the bank of the Yamunā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa decorated Śrī Rādhikā at this place when She was *māninī*, or exhibiting Her jealous anger. During His visit to Vṛndāvana, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu bathed here and stayed at the nearby Śṛṅgāravāṭa for some time.

Govinda-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is situated near Śṛṅgāra-ghāṭa, to the north. After Śrī Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the arena of the *rāsa*, He re-appeared in front of the *gopīs* at this place.

Cīra-ghāṭa

The mischievous Śrī Kṛṣṇa stole the clothes of the young *gopīs* while they were bathing and climbed up a *kadamba* tree. *Cīra* means “clothes”. Kṛṣṇa also rested near here after killing the Keśī demon. Therefore, another name for this *ghāṭa* is *Caina* (*caina* means “rest”) or *Cayana-ghāṭa*. Nearby is the well known *Jhāḍū-maṇḍala*.

Bhramara-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is located north of *Cīra-ghāṭa*. When *Kiśora* and *Kiśorī* performed Their pastimes here, bumble bees (*bhramara*) became intoxicated by the fragrance of Their bodies and started humming. This *ghāṭa* is therefore called *Bhramara-ghāṭa*.

Keśī-ghāṭa

This famous *ghāṭa* is situated north of *Bhramara-ghāṭa* in the north-western part of Śrī Vṛndāvana, and has already been described.

Dhīra-samīra-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is situated in the northern part of Śrī Vṛndāvana and near *Keśī-ghāṭa*, to the east. When the breeze (*samīra*) witnessed the pastime of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, it at once became very cool and started to move very slowly (*dhīre-dhīre*) so that it could serve Them. This place has also been described previously.

Rādhā-bāga-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is situated in the eastern part of Vṛndāvana. It has also been described before.

Pānī-ghāṭa

The *gopīs* crossed the *Yamunā* on foot from this *ghāṭa* and fed *Maharṣi Durvāsā* delicious food. This too has been described previously.

Ādi-badrī-ghāṭa

This *ghāṭa* is situated a little south of Pānī-ghāṭa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave *darśana* of Ādi-badrī-nārāyaṇa to the *gopīs* at this place.

Rāja-ghāṭa

Rāja-ghāṭa is situated in the south-eastern part of Vṛndāvana, to the south of Ādi-badrī-ghāṭa and on the bank of Yamunā's old course. Dressed as a boatman, Kṛṣṇa used to take Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *sakhīs* across the Yamunā from here. Halfway across, Kṛṣṇa would make many excuses to delay their crossing. The *gopīs* would order Him to cross the river quickly, and try to scare Him by mentioning the name of Mahārāja Kaṁsa. Thus, this *ghāṭa* is famous by the name of Rāja-ghāṭa.

In addition to these famous *ghāṭas* already described, the book *Vṛndāvana-kathā* mentions another fourteen *ghāṭas*: (1) Mahāntajī-ghāṭa, (2) Nāmāovālā-ghāṭa, (3) Praskandana-ghāṭa, (4) Kaḍiyā-ghāṭa, (5) Dhūsara-ghāṭa, (6) Nayā-ghāṭa, (7) Śrījī-ghāṭa, (8) Vihārijī-ghāṭa, (9) Dharoyāra-ghāṭa, (10) Nāgarī-ghāṭa, (11) Bhīma-ghāṭa, (12) Himmata-bahādura-ghāṭa, (13) Cīra or Caina-ghāṭa, and (14) Hanumāna-ghāṭa.

OTHER FEATURES OF ŚRĪ VṚNDĀVĀṆA

City quarters (mohallās)

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) Jñāna-gudaḍi | (29) Sukhanakhātā-gali |
| (2) Gopīśvara | (30) Purānā-śahara |
| (3) Vamśivaṭa | (31) Lārivālī-gali |
| (4) Gopinātha-bāga | (32) Gāvadhūpa-gali |
| (5) Gopinātha-bāzār | (33) Govardhana-darvāzā |
| (6) Brahma-kuṇḍa | (34) Ahīrapāḍā |
| (7) Rādhā-nivāsa | (35) Dumāitapāḍā |
| (8) Keśī-ghāṭa | (36) Varaoyāra Muhallā |
| (9) Rādhā-Ramaṇa-gherā | (37) Madana-Mohanaji-gherā |
| (10) Nidhuvana | (38) Vihārī-purā |
| (11) Pāthara-purā | (39) Purohitavālī-gali |
| (12) Nāgara-gopinātha | (40) Manīpāḍā |
| (13) Gopinātha-gherā | (41) Gautamapāḍā |
| (14) Nāgara-gopāla | (42) Aṭhkhambā |
| (15) Cīra-ghāṭa | (43) Govinda-bāga |
| (16) Maṇḍī-darvāzā | (44) Loī-bāzār |
| (17) Nāgara-govindajī | (45) Retiyā-bāzār |
| (18) Ṭakśāla-gali | (46) Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva |
| (19) Rāmaji-dvāra | (47) Chīpī-gali |
| (20) Kaṇṭhīvālā-bāzār | (48) Rāya-gali |
| (21) Sevā-kuñja | (49) Bundela-bāga |
| (22) Kuñja-gali | (50) Mathurā-darvāzā |
| (23) Vyāsa-gherā | (51) Savāī Jayasimha-gherā |
| (24) Śṛṅgāravaṭa | (52) Dhīra-samīra |
| (25) Rāsa-maṇḍala | (53) Ṭaṭṭiyā-sthāna |
| (26) Kīśora-purā | (54) Gahvaravana |
| (27) Dhobīvālī-gali | (55) Govinda-kuṇḍa |
| (28) Raṅgīlāla-gali | (56) Rādhā-bāga |

Famous samāja and samādhis

[A *samāja* is a place where devotees gather to hear and speak the glories of the Supreme Lord, His associates and so forth. A *samādhi* is where the body of a highly elevated devotee is placed after his departure from this world. *Sama* means “equal” and *dhī* means “complete absorption of the intelligence”. In other words, a person in *samādhi* has the same level of consciousness as one’s worshipful deity, and on that platform he is doing service.]

- (1) Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *samādhi* lies near Āditya-ṭīlā, in the southern part of the old Śrī Madana-mohanaji Temple. The *grantha-samādhi*, or *samādhi* of the Gosvāmī literatures is also here.
- (2) Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *samādhi* is to the left of the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara. The *samādhis* of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja lie behind the main temple.
- (3) Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī’s *samādhi* is near the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa.
- (4) Lokanātha Gosvāmī’s *samādhi* lies near Śrī Gokulānanda Temple. Next to Lokanātha Gosvāmī’s *samādhi* are the *samādhis* of Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura and Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.
- (5) Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita Gosvāmī’s *samādhi* is near Śrī Gopinātha Temple.
- (6) Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī’s *samādhi* lies in the centre of the *puṣpa-samādhis* of the sixty-four Gauḍīya *mahantas* opposite the temple of Śrī Govinda. The *samādhis* of the six *cakravartīs* and eight *kavirājas* are also there.
- (7) The *samādhis* of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya and Śrī Rāmacandra Kavirāja are near Dhīra-samīra.
- (8) Śrī Śyāmānanda Prabhu’s place (*samāja-bāḍī*) is near Śrī Śyāmasundara Temple.
- (9) Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī’s *samādhi* of his tooth (*danta-samādhi*) is in Keśī-ghāṭa.

- (10) Śrī Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's *samādhi* lies near Kāliyādaha.
- (11) Svāmī Haridāsajī's *samādhi* is in Nidhuvana.
- (12) Śrī Hitahari-vaṁśa Gosvāmī's place is near the temple of Śrī Rādhā-Vallabha.
- (13) Sūradāsa Madana-mohanajī's place lies near Śrī Madana-mohana Temple.

Famous kuṇḍas

- (1) Dāvānala-kuṇḍa – in Kevārivana
- (2) Viśākhā-kuṇḍa – in Nidhuvana
- (3) Gajarāja-kuṇḍa – in the temple of Śrī Raṅgajī
- (4) Lalitā-kuṇḍa – in Nikuñjavana (Seva-kuñja)
- (5) Brahma-kuṇḍa – to the north of Śrī Raṅgajī Temple
- (6) Govinda-kuṇḍa – near Śrī Raṅgajī Temple, in the eastern part of Vṛndāvana

Famous wells (kūpas)

- (1) Veṇu-kūpa – near Śrī Raṅgajī Temple
- (2) Sapta-sāmudrika-kūpa – near Gopīśvara Mahādeva
- (3) Gopa-kūpa – in Jñāna-gudaḍī
- (4) Rādhā-kūpa – in Vihāravana

Devīs (goddesses)

- (1) Pātāla-devī, or Yogamāyā – to the south-west of the ancient Govindajī Temple
- (2) Annapūrṇa-devī – near Sevā-kuñja
- (3) Paurṇamāsī-devī – near Sevā-kuñja, to the east

Mahādevas

- (1) Śrī Gopīśvara Mahādeva – near Vaṁśīvaṭa, to the north-east
- (2) Bankhaṇḍī Mahādeva – at the intersection of Loī-bāzār and Athkhambā

Banyan trees (vaṭas)

- (1) Advaitavaṭa – near the ancient Madana-mohana Temple
- (2) Śṛṅgāraṭa – on the bank of the Yamunā near Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple
- (3) Vaṁśivaṭa – in Rāsa-sthali

Kadamba trees

- (1) Keli-kadamba – on the bank of Kālīya-daha
- (2) Cīra-kadamba – on the bank of the Yamunā, near Dhīra-samīra
- (3) Dolā-kadamba – in the Rādhā-bāga Jhūlanavana

Endnotes

- 1 *tasmin vṛndāvane puṇyaṁ
govindasya nicketanam
tatsevakasamakīrṇaṁ
tatraiva sthīyate mayā
bhuvī govinda-vaikuṇṭhaṁ
tasmin vṛndāvane ṅṛpa
yatra vṛndādayo bhṛtyāḥ
santi govindalālasāḥ
vṛndāvane mahāsadma
yai dṛṣṭaṁ puruṣottamaḥ
govindasya mahīpāla
te kṛtārthā mahītale*
Skanda Purāna (Mathurā-khaṇḍa)
- 2 *vṛndāvane tu govindam
ye paśyanti vasundhare
na te yamaपुरam yānti yānti
puṇyakṛtām gatim*
Ādi-varāha Purāna
- 3 *kasyānubhāvo 'sya na deva vidmahe
tavāṅghri-reṇu-sparśādḥikāraḥ
yad-vāñchayā śrīr lalanācarat tapo
vihāya kāmān su-ciraṁ dhṛta-vratā*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.16.36)

- 4 *keśa-prasādhanaṁ tv atra
kāminyāḥ kāminā kṛtam
tāni cūḍayatā kāntām
upaviṣṭam iha dhruvam*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.30.33)
- 5 An ascetic who often transgresses the rules governing ordinary social conduct.
- 6 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Tenth Canto, Chapter Thirty-one (Gopī-gīta).*
- 7 *na pārāye 'ham niravadya-samyujām
sva-sādhu-kṛtyaṁ vibudhāyusāpi vaḥ
yā mābhajan durjara-geha-śṛṅkhalāḥ
samvṛścyā tad vaḥ pratiyātu sādhuṇā*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.32.22)
- 8 *tasya tatrottare pārśve
'śokavṛkṣaḥ sitaprabhaḥ
vaiśākhasya tu māsasya
śukla-pakṣasaya dvādaśyām
sa puṣpati ca madhyānhe
mama bhakta-sukhāvahaḥ
na kaścid api jānāti
binā bhāgavataṁ śucim*

Varāha Purāna



⁹ *tau hi mathurā-vṛndāvanayoḥ suprasiddha-mahāyoga-
pīṭha-yostattan nāмнаiva sahito prasiddhau āttaveṇuriti
iśeṣeṇā govindaḥ śrī-vṛndāvana-deva eva; tat sahapāṭhāt
keśavo'pi mathurā-nātha eva. (commentary on Śrīmad-
Bhāgavatam 6.8.20)*

¹⁰ *smerām bhaṅgī-traya pariṇācitām sāci-vistīrṇa dṛṣṭim
vaṁśī-nyastādhara-kisalayām-ujjvalām candrakeṇa
govindākhyām hari-tanum itaḥ keśi-tīrthopakaṅṭhe
mā prekṣiṣṭhās tava yadi sakhe! bandhu-saṅge 'sti raṅgaḥ
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.239)*

¹¹ Collecting alms from door to door in the manner of a
bee who collects honey (*madhu*) by going from flower to
flower.



Glossary



Abhiṣeka – bathing of the deity in milk, yoghurt, water and other ingredients at the deity's installation or on some other auspicious occasion.

Ācamana – a ritual of purification in which one sips water from the palm of the right hand and simultaneously chants names of the Supreme Lord.

Ācārya – spiritual preceptor, or one who teaches by example.

Āmāvasyā – the last day of the dark fortnight of a lunar month.

Aparādha – (*aṇa* – against, taking away; *rādha* – flow of affection) an offence committed against the holy name, Vaiṣṇavas, the spiritual master, sacred scriptures, holy places or the deity.

Apsarā – the heavenly wives of the Gandharvas; exceptionally beautiful dancing girls in Indra's court.

Āratī – the ceremony of offering a deity articles of worship, such as incense, lamp, flowers and fan, accompanied by the chanting of devotional hymns.

Āśrama – a hermitage.

Aṣṭa-sāttvika bhāva – one of the eight symptoms of spiritual ecstasy which form an essential ingredient of *rasa* (see **Rasa**), and arising exclusively from *viśuddha-sattva*, or unalloyed goodness untainted by material existence.

– B –

Bābā – a term of respect and honour given to (1) saintly persons and Vaiṣṇavas, particularly to those who have given up all connection with household life; (2) any elderly male person.

Bael – (also *bel* or *bilva*) the wood-apple tree and its fruit.

Baiṭhaka – sitting-place for reciting *mantras* at regular intervals or reciting scriptures; place for holding council assemblies.

Balabhadra – Baladeva, Balarāma.

Bhagavān – the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Bhāgavata-paramparā – disciplic line based on instructions (*śikṣā*) rather than on formal initiation (*dikṣā*).

Bhagavatī – a title used for a reverend lady.

Bhaiyā – brother; can also mean friend.

Bhajana – (1) activities performed with the consciousness of being a servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (see *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, *Pūrva-khaṇḍa* 231.3, which explains that the verbal root *bhaj* is used specifically in the sense of service); (2) in a general sense, *bhajana* refers to the performance of spiritual practices, especially hearing, chanting and meditating upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities and pastimes.

Bhajana-kuṭī – a hut, cottage or room used for performing one's spiritual practices.

Bhakta – a devotee.

Bhakti – loving devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Bhakti-yoga – the path of spiritual realisation through devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Bhāva – spiritual emotions, love, or sentiments.

Bhavuka – a devotee in the stage of *bhāva*, who is thus able to taste spiritual sentiments.

Bhoga – any item, particularly food, that has not yet been offered to the deity.

Brahmacārī – celibate student; a member of the first of the four divisions of life in the Vedic social system.

Brāhmaṇa – the highest of the four castes, or *varṇas*, in the Vedic social system; a priest or teacher.

Brajabhāṣā – the speech or dialect of Vraja.

Būdhī-līlā – the modern enactment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes that takes place at Sāṅkarī-khor in Varsānā, as inaugurated by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. Actually, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are never *būdhī*, old, but ever fresh.

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Cakra – Śrī Viṣṇu's disc weapon.

Cāmara – a yak-tail fan used in deity worship.

Cāturmāsya – the four months of the rainy season in India, when *sannyāsīs* do not travel and faithful devotees observe special vows of austerity.

Caube (Caubāin) – a particular *brāhmaṇa* community; a man (woman) of the Caube community.

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Daha – a deep pool within a river.

Ḍamarū drum – a small drum with a head on both ends and a narrow middle, allowing it to be easily held in the hand.

Dāna-ghāṭī – a place where toll is collected; especially a place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa demands tax from Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *gopīs* before allowing them passage across a river or through a narrow passage way between two hills.

Darśana – seeing, visiting or beholding (especially in regard to a deity, a sacred place or an exalted Vaiṣṇava).

Dāsa – a male servant.

Dāsī – a female servant.

Dāu Bhaiyā – Baladeva.

Dāūjī – Baladeva.

Devādhideva – (literally means “the god of gods”) a title of Lord Śiva.

Devanāgarī – the script used for Sanskrit and Hindi.

Devarṣi – a title, which usually belongs to Nārada Muni, meaning “divine sage” or “sage among the demigods”.

Dhāma – a holy place of pilgrimage; the abode of the Supreme Lord, where He appears and enacts His transcendental pastimes.

Dharma – constitutional nature; principles of religious conduct; religiosity; righteous prescription.

Dhīra-lalita nāyaka – the hero (*nāyaka*) who is expert in the sixty-four arts and amorous sports, who is always situated in fresh youth, who is expert at joking, who is devoid of anxiety, and who is controlled by the *prema* of His beloveds.

Dhotī – a single, long piece of cloth, usually made of cotton, traditionally worn by Indian men to cover the lower half of the body.

Dvādaśī – the twelfth day of the waxing or waning moon.



Ekādaśī – the eleventh day of the waxing or waning moon, on which devotees fast from

grains and beans and increase their remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates.



Gaon – village, same as *grāma*.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava – (1) any Vaiṣṇava who follows the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; (2) a Vaiṣṇava born in Bengal.

Ghāṭa – bathing-place; steps or landing-stage that lead down to a holy river, lake or pond.

Gomatī-cakra – a stone from the Gomatī River in Dvārakā.

Gopa – (1) a cowherd boy who serves Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a mood of intimate friendship; (2) an elderly associate of Nanda Mahārāja who serves Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a mood of parental affection.

Gopa-ramaṇī – shy young girl of Vraja who is expert in the various skills that awaken sweet emotions in Kṛṣṇa, and the very sight of whose face gladdens the heart.

Gopī – (1) one of the young cowherd maidens of Vraja headed by Śrīmatī Rādhikā who serve Kṛṣṇa in the mood

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of amorous love; (2) elderly associate of Mother Yaśodā who serves Kṛṣṇa in a mood of parental affection.

Gośālā – cowshed; a shelter for the cows.

Goṣṭha – a cowherd village of Vraja where Kṛṣṇa performs His pastimes.

Gosvāmī – (*go* – senses; *svāmī* – master of) (1) a title for those in the renounced order of life; (2) renowned followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who adopted the lifestyle of mendicants (especially refers to one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana).

Govardhana-śīlā – a stone from the sacred Govardhana Hill, which is as worshipful as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself.

Gullī-ḍaṇḍā – a game played with one small and one big stick.

Guñjā-mālā – a necklace of *guñjā*, or small, bright red seeds with a black spot on the top.

Guru, Gurudeva – spiritual master.

Gurukula – the residence (*kula*) of the spiritual master (*guru*).

Hari-kathā – see *Kathā*.

Harināma – the chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s holy names. Unless accompanied by the word *saṅkīrtana*, it usually refers to the practice of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* softly to oneself on a strand of *tulasī* beads.

Havelī – a brick or stone house; an imposing house or building.

Holī – (also known as *Phāga*) a major Hindu holiday celebrated on the last day of the bright fortnight of the month of Phalgun (February–March), in which the most popular activity is the throwing of coloured water and powders.

Hrada – a deep pool within a river.

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Jagad-guru – a spiritual master qualified to instruct and deliver the whole world.

Jhūlā – swing.

Jīva – the eternal, spiritual living entity.

Jīva-tattva – secondary expansion of the Supreme Lord.



Kajala – (also known as *añjana*) a preparation of lampblack used to darken the edges of the eyelids.

Kāma – (1) the love, or *prema*, of the *gopīs*; (2) material lust.

Kanhaiyā – a name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Kārtika – name of the Vedic month that occurs around October–November of the solar calendar, in which the Dāmodara form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is worshipped.

Kathā – (also referred to as *hari-kathā* or *kṛṣṇa-kathā*) narrations of the holy name, form, qualities and pastimes of Śrī Hari, or Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Kinnarī – a celestial being expert in singing and playing instruments.

Khaṇḍī – grove.

Khichrī – a dish made with rice and pulse boiled together.

Kīrtana – one of the nine most important limbs of devotional service, consisting of either (i) congregational singing

of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy names, sometimes accompanied by music, (ii) loud individual chanting of the holy name, or (iii) oral descriptions of the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's names, forms, qualities, associates and pastimes.

Kiśora (kiśorī) – youth.

Kiśora-Kiśorī – Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Kiśorījī – Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Kosa – one *kosa* is approximately two miles.

Kṛṣṇa-kathā – see **Kathā**.

Kṣetra-pāla – (*kṣetra* – area; *pāla* – protector) area-protector (in Vraja, this specifically refers to various forms of Lord Śiva, like Bhūteśvara Mahādeva in Mathurā).

Kuṁkum – a reddish powder or liquid that married women apply to the part in their hair.

Kuṇḍa – a pond or small lake, often with steps leading to the water.

Kuñja – a grove or bower; a natural shady retreat with a roof and walls formed by trees, vines, creepers and other climbing plants.

Kūpa – well.

Kuṭī – a hut, cottage.

Kyārī – grove.



Laḍḍu – a type of sweet, usually in the shape of a ball, made of gram-flour, sugar, clarified butter and other optional ingredients, like thickened milk, cardamom and saffron.

Lālā – a term of affectionate address that the residents of Vraja use for a young boy.

Lālī – a term of affectionate address that the residents of Vraja use for a young girl.

Līlā – the divine and astonishing pastimes of the Supreme Lord and His eternal associates, which grant all auspiciousness for the living entities, which have no connection with this mundane world, and which lie beyond the grasp of the material senses and mind.

Loka – planet.



Madhura-rasa – (or *mādhurya-rasa*, *śṛṅgāra-rasa*) the mellow of amorous love.

Mahābhāva – the highest stage of divine love (*prema*), which follows the stages of *sneha*,

māna, *pranaya*, *rāga* and *anurāga*, and manifests when *anurāga* reaches a special state of intensity.

Mahā-bhāgavata – a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord in the highest stage of devotional life, who is expert in Vedic literature, has full faith in Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and can deliver the whole world.

Mahādeva – Lord Śiva.

Mahārāja – great king or emperor; a form of address for a *brāhmaṇa* or for one's superior.

Māharṣi – a great sage.

Maiyā – mother.

Māna – the transcendental sentiment that prevents the lover (*nāyaka*) and beloved (*nāyikā*) from meeting freely, although they are together and are attracted to each other. *Māna* gives rise to transient emotions like anger, despondency, doubt, restlessness, pride and jealousy.

Maṇḍala – region, district or zone (e.g., Vraja-maṇḍala); circular stage (e.g., a *rāsa-maṇḍala*, which is built in memory of the *rāsa-līlā*.)

Mandira – temple.

Maṅgala-ārati – daily pre-dawn ceremony for worshipping the deity of the Lord.

Mañjarī – a maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Mantra – (*man* – mind; *tra* – deliverance) a spiritual sound vibration uttered over and over that delivers the mind from its material conditioning and illusion; a Vedic hymn, prayer or chant.

Maṭha – a temple of the Lord with attached living quarters for *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*; monastery.

Muñja – a rush or sedge-like grass that grows to the height of ten feet.



Nanda-Gokula, Nanda-Vraja – any place where Nanda Bābā used to reside with his family, cows, and the other *gopas* and *gopīs*.

Nāyaka – hero; especially refers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Nāyikā – heroine; especially refers to Śrīmatī Rādhikā and other *gopīs*.

Nikuñja – (also *kuñja*) bower, grove; a solitary place for the meeting and enjoyment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.



Parakīyā-rasa – paramour love.

Parikramā – circumambulation; the path that encircles a sacred tract, such as Vṛndāvana or Vraja; the covered pathway around a temple or the deities within a temple.

Prabhu – title meaning “master”, “lord”, or “ruler”.

Prāṇa-priyatama – one who is more dear than one’s own life.

Prāṇa-vallabha (Prāṇa-vallabhā) – one who is more dear than one’s own life.

Prāṇeśvarī – one who is the queen of one’s life.

Prasāda – (literally means “mercy”) refers to the remnants of food or other articles offered to the deity.

Pratibhū-vigraha – *pratibhū* means “to be equal to”. A *pratibhū-vigraha* is a deity that is considered non-different from the original deity it replaces.

Prema – love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa which is extremely concentrated, which completely melts the heart, and which gives rise to a deep sense of possessiveness (*mamatā*) in relation to Him.

Priyājī – Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Priya-narma-sakhā – Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa's intimate cowherd friends, which include Subala, Arjuna, Gandharva, Vasanta and Ujjava.

Priya-narma-sakhī – Śrīmatī Rādhikā's intimate *sakhīs*, such as Lalitā and Viśākhā.

Priyatama – dear most beloved.

Pūjā – offering of worship.

Purāṇa – the eighteen historical supplements to the Vedas.

Pūrṇimā – full-moon night.

Puṣkarinī – large lake or pond.

Puṣpa-samādhi – a *samādhi* established using flowers worn by a departed Vaiṣṇava before his body is embalmed and put into *samādhi*.



Rāga – a musical mode or sequence (e.g., *malhāra rāga*).

Rāga-mārga bhakti – the path of *bhajana* given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprābhū and which follows in the mood of the Vrajavāsīs, who have natural, spontaneous love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Rāgātmikā – one in whose heart a deep spontaneous desire to love and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa naturally and eternally exists. This specifically refers to the eternal residents of Vraja.

Rākṣasī – a female *rākṣasa*, flesh-eating demon, generally endowed with mystical powers.

Rāma – Balarāma (not to be confused with Lord Rāmacandra).

Rasa – (or *bhakti-rasa*) the spiritual transformation of the heart which takes place when the perfectional state of love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa known as *rati* is converted into 'liquid' emotions by combining with various types of transcendental ecstasies.

Rāsa-līlā – Śrī Kṛṣṇa's dance with the *gopīs* of Vraja. This is a completely pure exchange of spiritual love between

Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, His most confidential servitors.

Rāsa-manḍala – see **Maṇḍala**.

Rāsa-sthalī – a place where *rāsa* was performed.

Rasika – one who is expert at relishing *rasa*; a connoisseur of *rasa*.

Rṣi – a great sage learned in the Vedas.

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Sādhaka – one who follows a spiritual discipline with the objective of achieving pure devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and more specifically, *bhāva-bhakti*.

Sādhana-bhajana – (1) the method one adopts in order to obtain one’s specific goal, or *sādhya*.

Sādhu – (1) a highly-realised soul who knows life’s aim, who is himself practising *sādhana*, and who can engage others in *sādhana*; (2) (in a general sense) a saintly person or devotee.

Sakhā – a male friend, companion, or attendant.

Sakhī – a female friend, companion, or attendant.

Samādhi – a *samādhi* is where the body of a highly elevated devotee is placed after his departure from this world. *Sama* means “equal” and *dhi* means “complete absorption of the intelligence”. In other words, a person in *samādhi* has the same level of consciousness as one’s worshipful deity, and on that platform he is doing service.

Sampradāya – a line of disciplic succession; the authentic, unadulterated conception transmitted from one spiritual master to another; a particular system of religious teaching.

Śaṅkara – lord Śiva.

Saṅkīrtana – congregational chanting of the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Sārī – female parrot.

Sarovara – lake, pool, tank.

Sevā – service, attendance on, devotion.

Siddhānta – philosophical conclusions.

Śikṣā – spiritual instruction, teaching.

Śilā – a stone.

Smṛti – (literally, “that which is remembered”) the body of Vedic literature

that is remembered, in contradistinction to Śruti (see Śruti), or that which is directly heard by or revealed to the sages.

Śrī, Śrīmatī – honorific prefix to a name.

Śrīmatījī – Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Śruti – (literally, “that which is heard”) infallible knowledge that was received by Brahmā or by the great sages in the beginning of creation and that descends in disciplic succession from them.

Śuka – male parrot.

Surabhī cow – cow in the spiritual world that yields unlimited quantities of milk.

Svādhīna-bhartrikā – one of eight categories of *gopīs*, namely, a heroine who controls her hero.

Śyāma – blackish; colour of a dark, fresh raincloud; Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s complexion.



Tattva – truths, reality, fundamental philosophical principles (e.g., the truths relating to *bhakti* are known as *bhakti-tattva*).

Tattva-jñāna – knowledge of transcendental truth; knowledge in the science of God; knowledge of the Absolute Truth.

Ṭīlā – a hillock, mound.

Tīrtha – holy place, place of pilgrimage.

Tulasī – a sacred plant whose leaves and blossoms are used by Vaiṣṇavas in the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; the wood is also used for chanting beads and neck beads.



Vaiṣṇava – literally means one whose nature is “of Viṣṇu”, in other words, one in whose heart and mind only Śrī Viṣṇu or Śrī Kṛṣṇa resides; a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Viṣṇu.

Vana – forest.

Veda – the four primary books of knowledge compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, namely, the *Ṛg Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Atharva Veda* and *Yajur Veda*.

Vīṇā – a stringed, melodic musical instrument, the favourite instrument of Nārada Muni.

ŚRĪ VṚJA-MANḌALA PARIKRAMĀ

Vinodinī – one who is giving delight to Kṛṣṇa.

Viṣṇu-tattva – primary, personal expansion of the Supreme Lord.

Vrajavāsī – a resident of Vraja.

Vrata – a vow undertaken for self-purification and spiritual benefit.

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Yādava – a member of the Yadu dynasty, the dynasty in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared.

Yakṣa – ghostly follower of the demigod Kuvera, the treasurer of the demigods.

Yavana – (1) barbarian; one who does not follow a pure

lifestyle; one who eats flesh, takes intoxicants, and engages in other degraded activities; (2) a Muslim; (3) any foreigner or other person excluded from the Vedic social system.

Yogī – one who practises the *yoga* system with the goal of realisation of the Supersoul or of merging into the Lord's personal body.

Yuga – one of the four ages described in the Vedas, namely, Satya-yuga, Tretā-yuga, Dvāpara-yuga and Kali-yuga.

Yūtheśvarī – (*yūtha* – group; *īśvarī* – leader, controller) leader of a group of *gopīs*.



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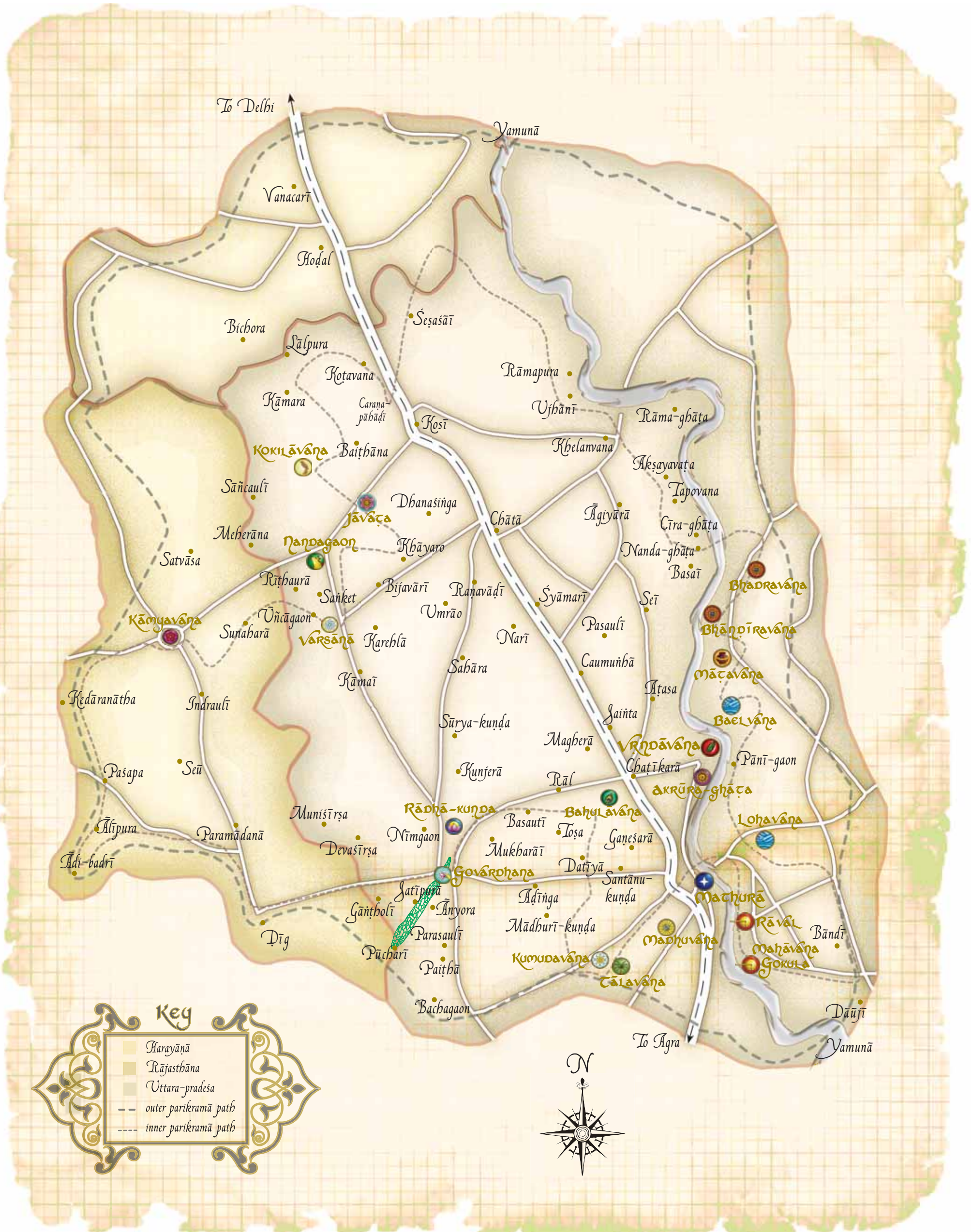
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ŚRĪ VRAJA-MANḌALA



Key

	Harayānā
	Rājasthāna
	Uttara-pradeśa
	outer parikramā path
	inner parikramā path